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SINBAD AND HIS FRIENDS

BY
SIMEON STRUNSKY



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PREFACE

Despite superficial indications to the contrary, the purpose of the present volume is a very serious one. The book is divided into two parts which are much more intimately connected than the reader may suspect at first sight. Part I deals with the adventures of a journalist named Sinbad in the city of Bagdad in the dim past of the year 1917 of the Christian era. Part II deals with the adventures of an American journalist named Williams in the New York of the year 1921.

A person might well ask: What connection can there be, on the one hand, between Sinbad, with his friends the Caliph, the Principal Censor, the Minister of High and Low Finance, the Chief Secretary of Ways and Detours, the Princess Ayesha, and other exotic figures, and, on the other hand, the perfectly commonplace Williams with his equally normal friends? The answer is simple.

Across the gulf of Space and Time the reader will discern the ties of a common humanity between the two men. He will be struck with a definite resemblance between the thoughts, the feelings, and even the concrete problems of two epochs and two civilizations. If Williams, in our own town and in our own day, seems to be thinking and saying very much the same things as Sinbad in his alien environment, it is not at all a case of mere repetition. It is only a case of the fundamental sameness of human nature.

In this the unity of the book consists.



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PART I
SINBAD

NOTE

Sinbad's story begins rather abruptly. But it is not at all difficult to reconstruct the substance of the missing chapters. Plainly Sinbad is the name bestowed by the people of Bagdad, for some unknown reason, upon an American newspaper man who arrived in the capital of Mesopotamia shortly after that country had thrown in its fortunes with the Allies in the war against the Empire of Madagascar. When the story opens, Sinbad has evidently won a place of confidence and friendship with pretty nearly everybody in Mesopotamia.

STORY OF THE MARCH OF DEMOCRACY

I HAVE seen the Commander of the Faithful in his thoughts before this, but never in such somber mood. His eyes were upon me as I made the customary triple prostration, but only when I was in my usual place on the edge of the rug did he speak.

"Draw nearer, Sinbad," he said gently.

I moved forward to within one meter (39.37 inches) from the royal divan, beyond which it is given only to the Head Gardener and the Chief of the General Staff to approach.

"I was thinking, Sinbad, of this sorry business of kingship," he said. "We rulers have fallen on evil days. As our poet Firdusi has said, 'We are such stuff as dreams are made of, and our little life—'"

But at this moment the curtains of the royal apartment were swept apart and the Principal Censor threw himself before his master's feet.

"Sire," he cried, "a woeful thing has happened. That unprincipled dog of an editor of the *Bazaar Gazette* has given aid and comfort to the enemy by stating in the Shipping Intelligence column that high water at the port of Basra next Wednesday will be at 11:52 A. M. and 10:38 P. M."

The Caliph looked long and fixedly at the Principal Censor.

"Unquestionably this calls for hanging and quartering," he said. "What puzzles me is whether it should be you or the editor of the *Bazaar Gazette*."

"Mercy, Indescribable One," pleaded the Censor.

"Very well," said the Caliph. "Let it be the editor."

And when the Censor had departed:

"I was saying, Sinbad, that time has made naught of us kings. I sit here and think, What am I? And the answer is, Shadow and dust. They think they please me by saying the Caliph can do no wrong. They leap up and shout, 'The Caliph is dead! Long live the Caliph!' But the man who cannot err, the man who cannot even die, oh Sinbad, is he a man at all? "

"More and less than that, your Majesty," I said. "You are one in a glorious succession—"

"Aye, that is it," he cried. "Our fame, we kings, is that of a link in the chain. We live in history as Selim the Bald, as Saladin the Bowlegged, as Ali the Henpecked, so distinguished from other Selims, Saladins, and Alis. The future will know me as Harun the Fifty-ninth, and little else. Harun the Fifty-ninth," he repeated bitterly. "How does that strike your ear? "

"Ineffable One," I said, "since you so command, it sounds like a subway station."

"Precisely," he said. "And our business is like our names. Once upon a time kings were kings. To-day we wear silk hats at garden parties, we bestow the order of Kappa Upsilon on distinguished visitors, and every little while we abdicate. As Saadi has said: 'Our little systems have their day, they have their day and cease to be.' "

"Yet your subjects offer up prayers for you and they call you Father of your People," I said.

"To my face, yes, but how is it—"

Once more the curtains were torn apart and the Principal Censor precipitated himself into our midst.

"Sire," he ejaculated, holding up his scissors and mucilage pot as if in tribute, "the editor of the Bagdad *Buzzer*, in a leading article on the financial situation, refers to the Grand Vizier as an ass."

The Caliph's brow darkened.

"Well, it is a fact, is it not?" he asked.

"Your pardon, Magnificence," cried the Censor. "That is all the more reason why the statement should be suppressed. And besides, August One, it discriminates against the other members of your Cabinet."

The Caliph sighed.

"Very well, censor it," he said.

"But the question is how, Illuminance?" said the Censor. "Shall we make it read 'The ——— is an ass,' or 'The Grand Vizier is an ———?'"

The Caliph pondered.

"Run the two versions one after the other," he said.

"That will serve to confuse the enemy."

The Principal Censor eliminated himself backward. The Caliph moistened his lips with his tongue and went on:

"You were saying, Sinbad? Oh, yes, about the people praying for their kings. But that, too, is form. The people will pray for anybody that collects the taxes. Take now the one ruler among the Infidels who does pretend to the manners and outlook of a king. I refer to Wullahim, the

Kaisar-il-Alleman. His nobles bow down before him and call him Viceregent of Allah. But let him touch these nobles and landowners in their interests and what then? 'Give us a fifty per cent. tariff on pickled tripe, Anointed of Allah,' they cry, 'or thy throne goes rolling into the dust!' That is kingship in these parlous days, my Sinbad."

I forbore to intrude on his sorrow, and contented myself with scratching the tip of my nose, which itched painfully. He spoke with sudden eagerness.

"Tell me about this new fashion they call democracy, Sinbad. Why do nations go mad over it? Is it cheaper than kingship?"

"Far otherwise, your Majesty," I told him.

"That is strange," he said. "We, with our palaces and establishments, come high for the people."

"But what is that to the cost of electing the Chief Magistrate of a republic?" I said. "Just figure it out for yourself, Sublime One. Your Civil List is how much?"

"Three million sequins a year," he said.

"And your Majesty's unctuous reign has endured how long?"

"Twenty-five years," he said.

"That makes seventy-five million sequins," I said, after making the calculation in my note-book. "Now, in some republics they will have had six elections of a Chief Magistrate in twenty-five years, at a cost of at least twenty-five million sequins an election, if you count the actual campaign expenditure, the service of taking the poll of twenty million voters, the stagnation of business, and the

pitiful waste of white paper in the form of editorials, authorized interviews, and disavowals of such interviews. Figure out for yourself, Majesty, the money cost for a people that goes every four years to the verge of nervous prostration."

The Caliph's eyes glittered.

"Now by the Shaven Eyebrows of the Dumb Hermit of Kandahar," he cried, "but that must be the life! Once every four years! I would—" But he checked himself.

"Well, then, Sinbad, does democracy work more smoothly than kingship?" he said.

"Your indulgence, Unparalleled One," I said. "Democracy operates like a flat wheel on a rural trolley car in the dewy silences of a July night."

"Then why—"

"Democracy, oh King," I said, in my most impressive manner, like the President of the University at the commencement exercises of the School of Journalism, "Democracy is even like Marriage. For people are always saying of these two, Is it a Failure? Is it a Success? And before they know it their fate is upon them. So, too—"

"Majesty," gasped the Principal Censor, sliding in feet foremost, "the editor of the *Evening Turban* is spreading abroad an impression of national disunion by speaking of the irrepressible sex-conflict—"

The Caliph flung his damask cushion, and hit the Collector of Widows' Pensions, who chanced to enter at that moment.

STORY OF THE BOLSHEVIK MIDDLEMAN AND THE CALIPH'S RELAPSE

DURING my first fortnight in Bagdad the visible stocks of honey in the bazaars were almost wiped out. Simultaneously prices attained an unprecedented level. Khorassan fancy prime rose from 13 maravedis the pound to 58 maravedis. Nineveh middlings, the great staple of the poor, went up from 7 maravedis to 46. Among the populace of the Maghreb or West Side, which is the workingmen's quarter, there was seething discontent. So the trusty Mesrour reported to the Commander of the Faithful.

Thereupon his Majesty, having wrathfully plucked at his beard for some time, sent for the Pomegranate and Jam Director and the Minister of Indeterminate Equations, who were jointly investigating the problem of high prices and scarcity. As it happened, the Pomegranate and Jam Director was out of town in connection with his dehydrated fig campaign, but the Minister of Indeterminate Equations declared that he was ready to answer all questions. To that end he brought with him three camel-loads of wholesale prices, a complete set of blue-prints in a piano case, and a twelve-cylinder counting machine.

"Abu Ramshyd," said his Majesty, after the operation of the counting machine had been explained to him, "why should the price of honey have increased 700 per cent.?"

"Sire," replied the Minister of Indeterminate Equations, "the problems of honey production and distribution are exceedingly complicated. A brief glance through these 350 pages will show you that as a result of the home garden campaign, one and seven-tenths per cent. of our garden area has been diverted from flower culture to pumpkins and millet. At the same time this thin-paper volume of 1,265 pages from the Imperial Weather Bureau will show that the average amount of daily sunlight in the course of the last six months has declined by ninety-one hundredths of one per cent. The effect on the bee industry of a declining sun ratio and a restricted flower supply is obvious. It is the war, Majesty."

"Now by the beard of the Conductor of the Bagdad Symphony," cried the Caliph, "will you tell me, Abu Ramshyd, why the outbreak of hostilities should affect the average daily precipitation of sunlight?"

"Majesty," said the Minister of Indeterminate Equations, "on that point our data are not complete. The reason may be that the regular clerk of the Weather Bureau has been drafted and his substitute is a young man who does not always add up his figures correctly. The fact remains that it costs one and a half maravedis more than a year ago to produce a pound of honey. This leaves us only an increase of thirty-seven and one-half maravedis to account for; which is easily explained by increased overhead."

"Overhead or underhand, I wonder which," mumbled the Caliph, whose occasional lapses into a low form of humor the reader will soon be accustomed to. And then,

seriously: "What remedy, then, do you suggest, Abu Ramshyd? Shall we get after the rascally middlemen in the bazaars?"

"Indubitable One," said the Minister of Indeterminate Equations, "it is unscientific and out of consonance with the modern spirit to assail individuals. I suggest an increased appropriation for twelve additional clerks and the purchase of a self-silencing dictograph. In that way we shall get at the truth before many months."

But when the Minister of Indeterminate Equations had departed, the faithful Mesrour prostrated himself before the royal couch and said, after his characteristic untutored fashion: "Sire, I know nothing about ichthyology, but the traders in the bazaar are gouging the poor. Your ancestors would have known how to go about it."

The Caliph pondered.

"As a modern ruler," he murmured, "I ought to prefer the dictograph and the Weather Bureau. As a descendant of the Prophet— Come, Mesrour, let us see for ourselves."

But when they had turned into the bazaar, they stood still at the sight of a ragged graybeard who sat half asleep in a corner with an ancient horn lantern by his side.

"Well met, old Diogenes," cried the Caliph. "We are now much in the same line of business. What say you? Shall we find an honest retail distributor by dint of searching?"

Diogenes glanced up feebly.

"There may be one or two, oh Stranger," he said. "But the price of illuminating oil has gone up 900 per cent., cotton wicks are 50 maravedis apiece, and I simply cannot

afford to keep my lantern going. You are welcome to it."

They declined his offer with thanks and made their way into a retailer's booth, where Mesrour painfully sorted out the sum of forty-six maravedis from his wages, placed them on the counter and asked for a pound of honey, Nineveh middling.

"The price is now fifty-one maravedis," said the trader. "Because of the earthquake in Malabar."

Mesrour hardly needed the wink from the Caliph. He leaped forward and the trader was lying face down on his own counter.

"As a progressive monarch," said the Caliph, "I bow my head to the inexorable sway of economic law. As an inheritor of the old Arabian blood, I shall now request the good Mesrour to unroll his camel's-hide whip and bestow forty lashes where it will do most good. Allah be with you, my son."

"Merciful One," cried the unhappy trader, recognizing his visitor, "bid your companion to let me go, and I shall look through my books again. I feel convinced that a more careful examination will reveal that my overhead is not as large as I supposed it to be."

"Very well," said the Caliph, "and remember, it's two lashes off for every per cent. down in your overhead."

At the meat stall before which they next halted, prices were 10 per cent. up over yesterday.

"Why?" demanded the Caliph.

"Stranger," said the slaughterer, smoothing his eyebrows in the reflection of his brass scales, "the cost of electric light has gone up 50 per cent., service 135 per cent., boards

for shelving 456 per cent., meat hooks 875 per cent., and wrapping paper 2,000 per cent. I have spoken."

"Take him, Mesrour," said the Caliph, and once more a badly frightened tradesman pledged himself to a revision of the law of supply and demand. The Caliph's temper was sadly frayed.

"Remember," he said, pausing in the doorway, "if I find you at your old tricks, I'll have you hanged on the lowest gallows in Bagdad."

"The tallest, you mean, Majesty," cried the tradesman, who in the midst of his fright kept his head for exact figures.

"The lowest," replied the Caliph, grimly. "Hemp having gone up 543 per cent., I have little rope to waste on scurvy rascals like you."

But, as they walked home, a sore doubt beset him.

"I have backslidden, Mesrour, I have relapsed. As a modern ruler I should have waited till the Minister of Indeterminate Equations had investigated these fellows, in 1926, and the courts had punished them, in 1937. I am but imperfectly civilized. Allah pity me."

STORY OF THE CALIPH'S TROUBLES

THE monarch was in Cabinet session when I sent in my card marked "Urgent." Within five minutes I was ordered to enter the presence. As I crawled into the royal chamber, several members of the Cabinet came crawling out, and I collided with the Minister of Internal Revenue.

"You will pardon the delay, Sinbad," said the Caliph, "but we were cleaning up the final details of the Princess Ayesha's wedding, and you know the Grand Vizier. He was under the impression that we were discussing the ecclesiastical budget, and every little while he had to be reminded."

"It is precisely on that business that I have come, your Majesty," I said. "I have received orders from my managing editor to send a thousand words by day cable on the marriage of the Princess Ayesha (may Allah bless her posterity) to the young Khan of Turkestan, fifty words on the political significance of the alliance and nine hundred and fifty words about the trousseau."

"It is long and expensive," said the Caliph, and sighed. I emitted a discreet cluck of sympathy.

"Sore indeed must be the affliction, oh Enlightened One," I said, "thus to part with a beloved daughter whose beauty, I have it on the best authority, is like the full moon over

the palm trees, and whose disposition, I have been informed, is even like the gazelles of Khorassan."

"True, Sinbad," he said. "And yet, know you, it is a relief, too."

I gurgled something non-committal.

"You have never had the giving of a modern daughter in marriage, have you, Sinbad?"

"That felicity has been denied me, Majesty," I said.

"When I first broached the subject to her," said the Caliph, "I naturally felt it my duty to devote a few well-chosen words to its solemn implications. But she interrupted me. 'Papa,' she said, 'you know as well as I do that marriage is a legalized device for the perpetuation of the race, so why pretend?' Know you how old is the Princess Ayesha?"

"Not more than eighteen," I said. "How else could it be?"

He sighed again.

"She told me, however, that she rather liked the young Khan of Turkestan and thought he would make a good husband."

"But surely the two could have never met," I said, mindful of the old Moslem etiquette on the mingling of the sexes.

"She saw him in the Bazaar when he made his official entry," he said.

"The Princess Ayesha in the Bazaar," I cried, more and more astonished.

"Disguised, of course, as a peddler of sunflower seed," he said; "the disguise she regularly assumes when engaged

in her scientific diet campaigns among the poor. But when I expressed my satisfaction, and ventured a few necessary commonplaces on the rights and obligations of wedlock, she said: 'Above all things, no cheap sentiment, Papa. There's just one basic principle to marriage, and I intend to live up to it: No annexations and no indemnities.' There was no use in arguing. Three days from now she will be on her way to Turkestan."

I waited diplomatically.

"As I said," resumed the Caliph, "it's a relief. You can hardly imagine what a nervous strain these modern young people are to us of an older generation. It's so hard to find out just where they stand. The Princess Ayesha will come in from one of her diet-kitchen trips and remind me how the children of the poor swarm in the back streets of Bagdad. The little boys, she tells me, are all growing up to be gangsters and the little girls—it keeps me awake nights, Sinbad."

"Strange," I said, "that one so young should take no joy in life."

"Who doesn't?" he demanded sharply.

"The Princess Ayesha," I replied.

"Don't be a fool, Sinbad," he said. "The Princess Ayesha is the best-dressed woman in the palace. She dances like a professional, plays four string instruments, the tuba, and the kettledrums, and swims the fifty yards in the seraglio tank in forty-one seconds. She has been after me to lay out a golf links at my summer residence close to the ruins of Nineveh, where there are all kinds of natural hazards, she says. But I haven't dared. Mon-

archy isn't such a safe business nowadays at best. It's unfair."

"What is unfair, Desirable One?" I said.

"This habit the young have of harrowing our middle-aged nerves," said the Caliph. "Their own nerves can stand it very well, don't you see. Ayesha will tell me that the ravages of tuberculosis in the poor districts of Bagdad are something dreadful. It is not to be denied. And I say to myself, 'Allah help me, what is to be done, what is to be done? Is it my duty perhaps to abdicate?' Then I look up and find Ayesha eating marshmallows. I was thoroughly unhappy for three days after Ayesha told me about the little boys who were growing up to be criminals and the little girls, but she went off to a dance at my brother's house."

He tapped the heel of his slipper with the edge of his scimitar and looked thoughtfully out of the window.

"The trousseau, Anointed One," I ventured to remind him.

"Except that it comes from Paris and is very costly, I can tell you little, Sinbad," he said. "We were just discussing it at the Cabinet meeting. I showed the Minister of High and Low Finance the list Ayesha had made out, and he said it would necessitate a two per cent. tax on fig exports in addition to the abandonment of the Bureau of Polar Exploration. I had talked it all over with Ayesha. I had suggested that on the occasion of her wedding there should be a distribution of bread and oil-cake to the populace. 'That's right,' she laughed, 'a handful of charity

now and then to keep them quiet.' I was very angry. 'Ayesha,' I said, 'I am the father of my people.' She said, 'Papa, you know you are only one of the exploiting classes, and the biggest of the lot. A dozen morning robes is not enough,' and she crossed out 12 and wrote in 36. Sometimes I am tempted to believe that Ayesha is frivolous."

"Compassion for my temerity," I cried, "but it is not so. My head upon it that the Princess is sincere."

"And the thirty-six morning robes?" he asked.

"Quite so, Beneficence," I said. "The Princess Ayesha is even like that Paris which has furnished her royal wedding gear. You know the nation of the French, Majesty?"

"Very little," he said, "except that it is a valorous people, considering it be an infidel nation, and that the language is curious. I have looked into the Princess Ayesha's exercise books. Instead of saying, 'What is that?' they say, 'What is this which it is which that?' or in their own language, 'Kesskessesskessah?' Instead of saying, 'My brother's pink woolen dressing-gown,' they say, 'The robe of the chamber of wool of pink of my brother.'"

"Majesty, the French are in the habit of saying worse things than that," I told him. "But they have also said much better things. They have given to the world its frivolous literature and its battle-slogans. They are the nation of the yellow-backed novel in paper at 3 francs 75 centimes and cheap at one-fifth the price, and they are the nation of Valmy and Verdun. Simultaneously they have

given to civilization its millinery and its Marne. The secret, of course, is eternal youth. Even so with the Princess Ayesha."

"You congratulate, then, the young Khan of Turkestan?" he asked thoughtfully.

"His will not be a dull life," I said.

STORY OF THE SUPPRESSED DESIRE AND THE INFLATED CIRCULATION

ANXIOUS to communicate the contents of my telegram to his Majesty without loss of time, I injected myself into the royal presence with unusual precipitancy. I was at the end of my fourth prostration and about a foot and a half, roughly, from the Sacred Divan when I became aware that the Commander of the Faithful was not alone. On a cretonne cushion at his feet knelt the Minister-General of Posts and Pillar Boxes, and the two were evidently in earnest consultation.

To put on brakes and apply the reverse crawl, or, as it is known popularly, the Diplomatic Glide, was but the work of a moment. I was already half-way through the brocade curtains when his Majesty deigned to take notice of my unworthy presence, and beckoned to me to return.

"You may be the man we want, Sinbad," he said. "The Minister of Posts and Pillar Boxes has been showing me a copy of the Bagdad *Monthly Mess*, the latest publication to be excluded from the mails by his personal order. He has just called my attention to a peculiarly obnoxious cartoon, as he considers it. What do *you* think, Sinbad?"

It is not always easy to read his Majesty's thoughts from his intonation or the glint in his eye. So I glanced hurriedly at the cartoon and said:

"Impenetrable One, it is a question of how you look at it."

"Naturally, you look at it right side up," the Caliph snapped, and there was no longer any doubt as to what the proper answer might be.

"Sire," I said, "the technique of the picture is marvelous. The man is a master of line and shade."

"It is more than that, it is awfully clever," declared his Majesty. "The whole paper is amusing. Vulgar, to be sure, but refreshing. I like the title. I like the motto: 'Tabasco for Grandmother!' I like the Board of Editors. There are seventeen responsible editors and thirty-six advisory editors, and all of them serious. Now, would you exclude a publication like that from the mails?"

"Sooner would I cut off my right hand, Infallible One," I declared, with a fervor of conviction which surprised me as much as any one in the royal chamber.

The Minister-General of Posts and Pillar Boxes smiled sardonically.

"Sinbad is hardly an unprejudiced witness, August Successor," he said. "He is something of a journalist himself, though harmless. The point is that this clever sheet, which no doubt it is, though I never read it, speaks of your Majesty as a weakling, and calls the war against Madagascar a crime. It is a public menace."

The Caliph was quick to take him up.

"But if you never read the paper, Burru-el-Hassan, how do you know?"

"It is perfectly simple, Uncontradictable One. I myself have no leisure, of course, for that sort of thing, my

time being entirely taken up with the elimination of waste in the Division of Canceled Postage Stamps. But I have implicit faith in the Chief of the Bureau of Suspicion and Heresy. He is a man with pronounced symptoms of dyspepsia, and he can tell sedition by a mere glance at the wrapper."

"How influential a paper is this *Monthly Mess*?" said the Caliph.

"It started with a circulation of 875, your Majesty," replied the Minister-General of Posts and Pillar Boxes. "We have been suppressing it for two consecutive months, and its circulation is now 15,000. This shows that there is no time to be lost."

The Caliph reached behind the silken cushions at the back of the divan and drew forth a newspaper with one hand while he shaded his eyes with the other. It was printed in seven colors, and the name of the publication was three-fourths of the way down the page.

"I have been looking into this paper from time to time, Burru-el-Hassan," he said, "and I have come across a good many things which would displease me exceedingly if I had the necessary symptoms of indigestion. Why not suppress it, too?"

The Minister of Posts and Pillar Boxes went deadly pale.

"Impossible, Sire," he stammered. "Two million people read it every day."

"So that you fail to regard it as a public menace?"

The Minister held up his arms in entreaty.

"Majesty, you will not take away from two million peo-

ple the daily Adventures of Dhingbat, of Kerisi Kat, and of Abu Kaab' Eblis, and the column of Uction for the Heartbroken? Consider the consequences. It's revolution. And besides, deign to glance through the pages. Everywhere you see charming little pictures of the banner of the Prophet and heartening little mottoes like 'Mesopotamia First' and 'All for Mesopotamia.' Think again, oh Considerate One."

"The banners and the mottoes are delightful," said the Caliph, "and the exhortations of loyalty addressed to the public are no less pleasing. Give ear, Sinbad: 'Mesopotamia will hold no price too high for victory in the life-and-death struggle we are now waging in conjunction with cowardly Britain and the deluded French against the unconquerable hosts of Madagascar.' Or this, Sinbad: 'Two billion sequins for wooden ships is not enough. We must be prepared to spend at least five billions on wooden bottoms that will last the Madagascar submarines just about a month if indeed they do not turn turtle before leaving port.' Or this: 'Without fear or hesitation, with clenched teeth and resolute heart, we must plunge forward into the bottomless abyss.' It's a fine, loyal sheet, Sinbad. When you have read this newspaper carefully, you will understand why it is necessary to exclude that other thing, the *Monthly Mess*, from the mails."

The Minister of Posts and Pillar Boxes heaved a great sigh of relief, and his countenance was like the sun when it sets behind the Euphrates desert.

"I am happy to have convinced your Majesty," he said. "As for this essentially harmless organ of public opinion,

I fail to understand how the Chief Private Scribe of the Antechamber permitted a copy to reach your august hands without deleting the few infelicities that will creep into the best-regulated newspaper."

The Caliph shook his head.

"I don't get it from the Chief Scribe," he said. "He supplies me only with clippings from the dignified newspapers of Mesopotamia. I find them difficult reading in the subdued light of this chamber. The Chief Scribe retains this particular publication for his own use when he goes out for his midday meal. But I have a private arrangement with his office boy."

He thought a moment and sighed.

"I suppose I must let you have your way, Burru-el-Hassan," he said. "But in the name of Allah, I implore you to suppress the *Monthly Mess* utterly before it attains a circulation of a million and adds a department for the Heartbroken."

But at this instant a stranger projected himself into the Presence and cried aloud: "Justice, Sire. Mercy, oh, Compassionate! "

"What is your need, son? " said the Caliph.

"Kindly One," uttered the stranger, "I am the editor of the Bagdad *Hysterical Quarterly*. I began a year ago with a circulation of 250 and a policy of consistent disloyalty. But I have escaped the attention of the Minister of Posts and Pillar Boxes, and to-day my circulation is 234. Merciful One, suppress me! "

"To what good? " asked the Caliph.

"My subscriptions are paid up in advance," cried the

suppliant. "If I can save white paper and composition on only two numbers, I may come out even. And I need a vacation."

He sobbed violently.

"Have your wish, son," said the Caliph. "See to it, Burru-el-Hassan."

STORY OF THE TRUE BELIEVERS

ABOUT this time there came to Bagdad the whirling dervish Bhilee-el-Sunnadieh, to save the people from destruction. It was his solemn belief that more than the inhabitants of any other city in Mesopotamia the people of Bagdad are given over to worldly wisdom. He called them sophisticated, fat of heart, smug with content, and in every other way the servitors of the Spirit that denies, which is Sheitan.

The dervish Sunnadieh never wearied of making this point. He did it on his feet, on his hands, on the flying trapeze, in the standing broad jump, and with the half-nelson. Whether he addressed you from the top of the reading-desk or from between the legs of the grand piano the burden of his complaint was always the same: The people of Bagdad will not believe and are bound straight for hell, where they belong.

Naturally I determined to canvass public opinion on the subject. With that end in view I first approached my good friend Hussein the Sanitary Barber, whom I found in the open space behind his booth digging up the soil for potatoes. Him I addressed, saying, "Oh, Hussein, son of Ali, I entreat thee, refrain from your labors in behalf of the nation's food supply long enough to bestow upon me a shave

and facial massage." And as I reclined in the chair watching the play of his razor on the strop I said, "Is it true, oh Hussein, that the people of this city are set in their opinions and convinced that they know it all?"

For some time he studied the tip of his nose in the mirror after the fashion of his kind. Then he laughed.

"Sinbad," he said, "some child of Eblis has been pulling thy leg. In the words of our immortal mufti, Abu Mutal-lib, there is nothing to it. The people of Bagdad will believe anything."

Having paused to reflect, he resumed his discourse at break-neck speed, yea, like the wild ass of Irak scenting the cool of the date trees at nightfall.

"They believe what they read; they believe what they hear, even to the third and the fourth remove. They believe Wullahim-ah-Hoirst. They believe the Fakirs of the Street of the Golden Wall where they go to exchange their good sequins and jewels for Insulated Copper preferred. They believe the rescripts and decrees of the Aintar-Buru."

"And who would the last-named be?" I asked.

He explained that the Aintar-Buru is a guild which owns and controls the business of camel transport within Bagdad, and upon which the inhabitants entirely depend for conveyance to and from their work in the bazaars. By dint of much thought and labor the Aintar-Buru has succeeded in increasing the average camel load from four passengers to twenty-six, leaving room enough on the flanks of the patient beasts—that is, the camels—for the posting of proclamations in large type, saying, "Our hearts go out

to our passengers. Write to us and you shall be comforted, in the name of Allah! " And the people of Bagdad believe this. And when the camel trains break down utterly, and the loading bridges are crowded to suffocation, and the ticket-selling slaves of the Aintar-Buru, seated in their kiosks, say to the populace, "Come ye in, come ye in, there is plenty of room," the people believe them, too.

Much more Hussein told me concerning the child-like faith of the Bagdadanese. They believe in the efficacy of the laws. When a law is enacted by the Council prohibiting the carrying of deadly weapons by the common people they believe that the homicide rate the following morning has been reduced by nine-tenths; and when the law is declared to have failed they believe it just as easily. So great is their belief in the laws that, once a law is proclaimed, they do not think it necessary to enforce it. And especially do they believe that for any betterment in their health, or their government, or their social conditions, all that is required is to set apart a Day for the purpose. Thus Hussein mentioned:

Open-Window Day.

Love-Your-Mother Day.

Salute-the-Flag Day.

Babies' Day.

Eat-an-Apple Day.

Get-Acquainted-With-Your-Neighbor Day.

Visit-the-Aquarium Day, etc.

Hussein pointed out that while nobody has ever been observed to perform any of these appointed ceremonials

on the appointed day, everybody believes that everybody else is doing it.

I was ruminating on the many strange things which the Sanitary Barber had told me when all at once he seized a crystal bowl of liquid perfume and made as if he would deluge my head and face with it after the manner of his tribe. He received my protest with ill-grace, as is customary, whereupon, to appease him, I said, "Tell me this, oh Hussein, do the people of Bagdad find it difficult to believe so many things at the same time?"

His face brightened, like the sheen of the palm leaf under the new moon.

"Quite the contrary, Sinbad," he said. "The advantage of having numerous and contradictory things to believe in is that everybody can pick out the particular thing to which he may pin his faith. Take, for instance, the question of How to Succeed, in which the people of Bagdad are more interested than in anything else. For that purpose they read the inspirational Magh-Azins."

"I do not know them," I said.

He explained that a Magh-Azin is a publication issued every new moon and containing chapters on how to succeed in life by eminent men who have succeeded. If you read these chapters one after the other you find that the secret of success is (1) to go to college, (2) to start in as a foundry apprentice, (3) to determine beforehand what you want to do, (4) to look about and experiment before settling down, (5) to go East to Baluchistan and grow up with the country, (6) to stay in Bagdad, where the

opportunities are richest, (7) not to marry until one has a competence, (8) to find the right woman who will share your ambitions and struggles with you, (9) to study Spanish and French, (10) to go in for Occasional Training.

The latter was a term which I did not comprehend. But of that later.

STORY OF FATIMA AND THE BOND- SALESMAN

THE authenticity of the following narrative I can personally vouch for. It was imparted to me under the seal of strictest confidence by the Grand Vizier, by the head scribe of the Bureau of Polar Exploration, by the Keeper of the Tennis Courts, by the chief mufti of the Executive Committee of the National Mesopotamian Association for the Capture and Consolidation of Equal Rights for Women (familiarily known as the E. C. N. M. A. C. C. E. R. W.), and by the head barber at the caravanserai where I lodge.

It would appear then that on a certain day the Commander of the Faithful, musing on the probable outcome of the Two Billion Defense Loan, sent for Ali ben Hassan, his chief cosmetician and professor of modern languages, and caused himself to be disguised as an itinerant merchant's clerk, even to the curl of the beard and the slant of the eyebrows. Inserting a handful of cigars into the folds of his turban and carrying a wallet with several bonds of the denomination of 100 sequins and upwards, the Caliph departed from Bagdad and betook himself to the village of Hammidieh, in the outskirts whereof he accosted the husbandman, Yussuf ben Omar, plowing behind a team of oxen.

"Peace to you and yours, oh Yussuf," said the Caliph. "We are obviously in for a spell of warm weather. Attempt

one of these cigars, I entreat you, and put the rest in your girdle. I have here a proposition—"

"I have met you before," said Yussuf.

"It may be," said the Caliph.

"Four years ago," said Yussuf, "you sold me fourteen cubits of Moslem Masterpieces in limp leather for a small payment down."

"True, oh Yussuf," said the Caliph.

"Three years ago," said Yussuf, "you sold my wife Fatima a combination rug sweeper and music box on the same terms."

"Allah has strengthened your recollection," said the Caliph.

"Last year," said Yussuf, "you sold me flood insurance."

"For each day its special need," said the Caliph. "Now I hold in my hand—"

"I know," said Yussuf. "It behooves me merely to sign my name at the foot of the paper and to make 7,000 weekly payments thereafter."

"More or less," said the Caliph, "dependent on the amount."

Yussuf considered for a brief space.

"You see the irrigation ditch that bounds my millet field," he said.

"It is a noble ditch," said the Caliph.

"It is three feet wide at the top," said Yussuf. "A man might easily take it on the jump, especially with a flying start."

"Assuredly," said the Caliph.

"I grant you that flying start," said Yussuf.

The Caliph's hand swept back to where his scimitar should have been, but he checked himself.

"The scroll of the past is rolled tight and sealed, oh Yussuf," he said. "This is altogether a different affair."

"Now, by the scalloped eaves of the Sacred Bungalow of Ararat," cried the farmer, "if you persist!"

The other unrolled the engrossed and illuminated bond.

"For Caliph and Country," he said solemnly. "The Successor of the Prophet is at war with Madagascar. The men he has; but how, oh Yussuf, shall they be armed and fed? This parchment is worth 100 sequins. I offer it to you for that amount."

Yussuf stared.

"Never before this have you offered me for the sum of 100 sequins anything worth less than five times that amount," he said. "Mayhap you have been listening to the whirling dervish Sunnadieh and got religion."

The Caliph pushed his advantage.

"Your country calls, Yussuf ben Omar," he said. "In this war against Madagascar some make offer of their lives; the others must give of their means. It is a national service."

"Have I not done enough?" said Yussuf. "The tax-gatherer is ever at my elbow. Fertilizer has gone up 200 per cent. Asses and mules have gone up 60 per cent. Hired men are not to be had. What more does the country want?"

"But as a business proposition, Yussuf," said the Caliph. "A gilt-edged investment; $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, for thirty years

backed by the credit of Mesopotamia and tax-exempt; the greatest going concern in the two hemispheres; assets over 100,000,000,000 sequins over liabilities, and only the surface of the property scratched."

The farmer rubbed his chin.

"You say there is no risk?"

"I swear it by both shores of the Euphrates," said the Caliph.

"Bah," said Yussuf. "Then what kind of national service do you call this? While other men are taking the peril of life and limb, you would have me serve my Caliph by drawing 3½ per cent. on a gilt-edged security. It is a safe patriotism."

Here the Caliph lost his temper.

"Now Eblis take me, but it is not so safe as that! Hold tight your purse-strings, old curmudgeon, and you'll have the hordes of Madagascar sweeping over your millet fields before the year is over and burning the roof over your head. It is a toss-up as it is."

"Oh," said Yussuf, "then it *is* taking a chance?"

"Unquestionably."

"Like the Moslem Masterpieces and the carpet sweeper?"

"More or less."

"In that case—" said Yussuf, but at this moment his wife, Fatima, came walking across the fields towards her husband. Seeing the stranger, she dropped the veil over her face.

"Lift your veil, Fatima; it is only an agent," said Yussuf.

She came up to them.

"Father of my children," she said, "what would the young man?"

"He would sell us a 100-sequin Defense Bond," said Yussuf.

The Caliph intervened.

"I was telling your husband, oh woman among ten thousand, that in the present emergency it is simple duty to give of your means to the Government, seeing that others stand ready to give their lives—"

Fatima's eyes grew dim and she turned away. Yussuf's hand came down heavy on the Caliph's shoulder.

"Incomparable Idiot," he whispered, "our eldest son, Malek, has enlisted with the spearmen; Selim, our second, has joined the Sub-Surface Camel Squadron, and now the youngest is clamoring to go."

"Allah take pity on my ill-adjusted faculties," said the Caliph. "How was a man to know?" He bent to the ground and retreated.

"Stay," said Fatima, and then to her husband: "The hens, oh Glory of my Household, are laying well. The brown calf is almost ready for the slaughterer. There is a bit of money coming in from the wool-merchant. Let us take this one with the green and purple lettering."

"Can we afford it, Fatima?" said Yussuf.

"I have just been reading up a new way of utilizing pomegranate seeds in a bulletin of the Mesopotamian Mothers' Association," said Fatima. "We will manage, Chief Jewel of my Diadem."

"One hundred sequins?" said Yussuf.

"Five hundred," said Fatima, and the Crown of her Existence, breathing hard, signed.

"Admirable Mother," said the Caliph. "Your country thanks you."

"It will look lovely in a gold frame in the parlor," said Fatima.

STORY OF THE ENTANGLED LEGISLATOR

THE Commander of the Faithful, accompanied by his sword-bearer, Mesrour, and by the Principal Censor, was making his nightly round among the home gardens in the environs of the capital. There suddenly fell upon the royal ears the sound of a man's lamentations mingled with gentle words of comfort from a woman's lips. By the light of Mesrour's lantern they saw that the accents of grief emanated from an individual of middle age, who leaned his head against the wall of a porch with eyes half-closed, pausing occasionally to glance at an engrossed parchment in his right hand, the perusal of which only seemed to intensify his sorrow. By his side sat a woman, his wife, and fondled his right hand and wiped the perspiration from his forehead with the folds of her long veil.

"By the beard of the Collector of Internal Revenue for the Third District," cried the Caliph, "but this is a woeful sight," and with characteristic impulsiveness he snatched from the hand of the Principal Censor the thermos bottle which was the sign of his office (so that as occasion required the Principal Censor might blow hot or cold) and held it to the sufferer's lips. And when the latter had drunk, "Tell me, oh stranger," said the Caliph, "the cause of your unmitigated nocturnal woe."

The stranger handed the parchment to the Caliph; "Read," he said, and relapsed with his brow against the

porch steps. Bidding Mesrour hold his lantern aloft, the Caliph read aloud:

“An Act for the Regulation and Conservation of the National Food Supply:

“Section 1. The sum of 2,500,000 sequins is hereby appropriated for the erection of a marble post office in the Fourteenth Electoral District of Bagdad.

“Section 2. All appropriations for the deepening of the Tigris channel below the port of Basra as herein provided shall be expended only under the supervision of the Imperial Engineering Department.

“Section 3. The Act of 1897 relating to pensions for the war of 1456 is hereby amended by the omission of the word ‘not’ wherever it occurs.

“Section 4. Full freedom of worship is hereby reaffirmed for all natives of Mesopotamia.

“Section 5. All gold coins of the denomination of 100 sequins and upward shall hereafter be issued only from the Central Mint at Bagdad.

“Section 6. A minimum length of two and a half cubits for all bed-linen and blankets in public inns in towns of more than 30,000 population is hereby established.

“Section 7. Compulsory Arabic and Hindu shall henceforth be required for all entrance examinations to the Government colleges.”

The Caliph looked up in wonder.

“But what has all this to do with an act for the regulation and conservation of the national food supply?” he said. Whereat the stranger raised his head, said, “Ah,” and burst into uncontrollable tears.

Thereupon the woman, his wife, putting her arm fondly about her husband's shoulder and addressing herself to the Caliph, lifted up her voice and said: "Know ye, strangers, that this my husband was chosen a short year ago to the National Council of Elders from the Ninth Euphrates District, and that he entered the legislative halls of the capital with the firm resolve to give all that is best in him to the business of framing the laws of his country. To that end he said farewell to his family save me, his wife, abandoned his outdoor pastimes, and purchased a set of the *Encyclopedia Babylonica* in one hundred and thirty-seven volumes on the instalment plan. Having prepared himself diligently for the task, he arose in the Legislative Hall a fortnight ago, while the Bill for the Regulation of Electric Franchises was under consideration, and started to address the House on the use of electric current in domestic industry."

Furtively she brought the corner of her veil to her eyes, and the Caliph's hand went out to her in instinctive sympathy.

"My dear madam," said the Caliph.

"It is nothing," she replied. "My husband had hardly begun to dilate on the advantages of the patent electric iron in the home when the Chief Cadi of the House brought down his gavel with a crash and declared that the gentleman from the Euphrates was not addressing himself to the subject in hand.

"'We are discussing the Bill for Electric Franchises,' said my husband.

"'True,' said the Chief Cadi, 'but we now have under

consideration Section 12, providing for a national census of oleomargarine factories.'

" 'Will I be in order under the next section?' asked my husband.

" 'No,' said the Chief Cadi, 'that deals exclusively with hoof-and-mouth disease in Baluchistan.'

" 'Section 37, then,' said my husband.

" 'By consulting his printed copy of the bill,' said the Chief Cadi drily, 'the gentleman will discover that Section 37 relates to import duties on ostrich eggs, mediæval sculpture, and taffeta.'

" 'In that case,' cried my husband in desperation, 'when will the opportunity arise to discuss electric franchises?'

" 'I cannot say,' replied the Chief Cadi, 'unless it comes up under the Bill for the Regulation of the Local Judiciary.'

" 'From that time," the woman went on, as she held the thermos bottle to her husband's lips, "his splendid dreams of service to his country faded. He did not give in readily. One flash of hope there came. My husband was pledged to his constituents to secure legislation for the erection of a Museum of Fine Arts in his district. He came home one night from the House all aglow. 'I have done it, Fatima,' he cried. 'You know the Forest Reserve Bill? Well, Section 8 in the original form provided, by pure accident, for the organization of a corps of 5,000 men for the purpose of fighting forest fires, and I have succeeded in having my Museum Bill substituted.' That night he could not sleep for happiness. Alas! Next day the House adopted an amendment to his amendment, providing for the equipment

and dispatch of a scientific expedition to the North Pole."

"And since then he has been like this?" asked the Caliph.

She nodded miserably.

"Now by the sacred turban of Ispahan," cried Mesrour, "it were best, oh Majesty, to put this poor fool out of his misery once for all." The heavy scimitar flashed upward and the woman shrieked; but the unhappy legislator looked up and said wearily: "Not that it makes any difference to me, but by what authority would you take my life, efficient stranger?"

"Section 13 of the Deep Sea Fisheries Act," said Mesrour grimly.

"Let be, Mesrour," said the Caliph; "the man has spent himself for his country."

STORY OF THE BEWILDERED BRIDEGROOM

NOW that the Princess Ayesha is happily wedded and on her way to Turkestan, there can be no harm in my betraying the secret that only by the narrowest kind of a squeak was catastrophe averted almost at the last moment.

In the dusk of evening on the day before the nuptials I was passing through the court which separates the offices of the Principal Censor from the Bureau of Irrigation and Fine Arts when I discerned the figure of a man seated in an attitude of utter dejection on the fountain's edge. His chin was in the palm of his right hand, and with his foot he was demonstrating in the gravel of the courtyard the never-to-be-forgotten truth that the sum of two sides in any triangle is greater than the third side.

Coming closer, I saw that it was the young Khan of Turkestan, husband-to-be of the Princess Ayesha.

"Highness," I exclaimed, "you here and at this hour?"

He looked at me with lack-luster eyes, and in a voice that went straight to the heart, "Is it you, Sinbad?" he said. "Well, it's all off, old man."

"Now, by the beard of the General Manager of the Bagdad Oil Subsidiaries, you are jesting, Highness," I cried.

He shook his head, and with the toe of his left sandal proved beyond cavil that in any circle the circumference

is equal to the diameter multiplied by 3.14159. Then suddenly, "Tell me this, Sinbad," he said; "of how many minds may any woman at any given moment be, simultaneously?"

"Transparency," I said, "by the latest census figures there are in Mesopotamia 11,345,234 women between the ages of six and eighty-four. But to-morrow's nuptials—?"

Thereupon he told me.

It would seem that only an hour before, the young Khan, with his bride, her royal father, and the Chief Mullah, were met to decide on the final details of the marriage contract and the wording of the oath. On his own initiative the Mullah had omitted "obey." All that we can ask of young people nowadays, he said, is that they shall love and cherish—

"No," said the Princess Ayesha, "love and respect. I don't want to be cherished, and I won't condescend to cherish. We can very well take care of ourselves. Hassan and I are to be comrades and friends."

"And I consented readily, Sinbad," said the young Khan, "for, looking at Ayesha, even beneath her veil, there was naught but her that mattered."

"True," I said. "'A book of verses underneath the bough, a crust of bread, and Thou beside me in the wilderness.'"

"What's that from?" asked the Khan.

"Omar Khayyam, your Highness, one of your eminent poets of Central Asia."

"Never heard of him," he said. "But stay. I recall now some such verses chanted by a young woman from

America who visited Turkestan a few years ago. She went about with a kodak and nearly drove the Superintendent of the Woman's Palace insane. I was saying: I agreed to Ayesha's stipulation, and then, moved by I know not what excess of tenderness, of which even now I am not ashamed, 'Write it down in the contract, oh Mullah,' I said, 'that, contrary to the immemorial practice of the princely house of Turkestan, never, after Ayesha crosses the threshold of my palace as my wife, shall another woman enter to share or dispute with her the respect and—'

" 'Please, please, no sentiment, Hassan dear,' laughed Ayesha. 'It is very nice of you, to be sure, but after all we know the male of the species is as yet imperfectly monogamous, and writing it down in the contract would not make it otherwise.'

"That hurt, Sinbad. The Caliph, her father, blushed, and the Chief Mullah had a bad fit of coughing. But I cared for Ayesha, and I wanted to do the right thing. 'Very well,' I said, 'we will be practical. Write, oh Mullah, that whatsoever privileges I may hereafter arrogate to myself, these rights I concede to Ayesha. There shall be no double standards in Turkestan.'

" 'Now you are insulting,' said Ayesha; 'I won't stay here another minute.'

" 'But by the Twenty-four Books of the Shah Nameh,' I cried, 'what have I done, Ayesha?' Only she would not answer.

" 'Son, beg her pardon,' whispered the Caliph behind his hand.

" 'But—'

"The Chief Mullah bent over me. 'Beg her pardon, you idiot, or you're done for,' he hissed.

" 'Ayesha,' I said, 'return; I beg your pardon.'

"She came back and sat down at a little distance. 'The least I can expect is that you consider my feelings,' she said. 'Let us proceed.'"

Well, when they came to Clause XII, Subdivision C, of the marriage contract, enumerating the bridegroom's gifts, the young Khan remarked on the famous royal emeralds of Turkestan. "They will match Ayesha's eyes," said he.

"How do you know the color of my eyes?" said Ayesha. "You have never seen me unveiled."

"They all three stared at me, Sinbad, and I could not but confess the truth. 'I have not seen your living features, Ayesha,' I said. 'But your photograph—'

" 'Where?' she asked.

" 'In the New York *Sunday Supplement*,' I said. 'That American woman with the kodak. She told me that on her way to Turkestan she had visited Bagdad. It came to me all at once that she might have met Ayesha. I sent a special ambassador to search the files of the illustrated papers, and after two years they found the picture.'

"Ayesha came close to me and said in a strange voice, 'You did this for me, Hassan?' But I remembered what she said about sentiment, and I made answer, 'Naturally I wished to know what the mother of my children would look like.' She stood straight up and said, 'Hassan, you might at least be a gentleman, even if you don't care a rap for me,' and walked out. Why was I ever born, Sinbad?"

Now the chill of evening had descended upon the courtyard, and as I sat on the cold stone of the fountain-rim in my light Oriental robes and racked my brains for words of suitable comfort, I sneezed mightily and again and again; and just then the veiled figure of a woman passed across the courtyard. Ayesha stopped and looked back.

"Who was that? You, Sinbad?" she said.

I was inspired: "Not I, Serenity."

She turned to Hassan.

"How long have you had this cold?"

I nudged him fiercely and he understood.

"Since yesterday, Ayesha," he said humbly.

"Go straight to your room and gargle with bicarbonate of soda," she commanded.

"As you say, Ayesha," replied the young Khan and departed. The next day they were married.

STORY OF THE UNPLEASANT TASK

I WASTED no time in preliminaries.

"Majesty," I said, "is there enthusiasm among the people of Mesopotamia for this war with the Empire of Madagascar?"

The Caliph glanced anxiously at the curtains through which the Principal Censor had but now disappeared.

"Never fear, Illustrious," I observed. "By this time he is busy with the naval reports, eliminating all references to the equator."

"In that case, Sinbad," he said, "I am free to state that there is no overwhelming enthusiasm for the war. And between you and me, I am neither surprised nor disappointed."

"'Tis a pity," I said.

"Not at all," he countered sharply. "Have you ever cleaned out the furnace or chastised one of the children with enthusiasm?"

"Incomparable One," I cried, "surely that hand has never been laid upon the royal offspring, save in kindness!"

He shook his head wearily.

"You are shocked, Sinbad? Well, I have tried the other thing. I have been modern. I have resorted to moral persuasion. I have taken them singly or half a dozen at a time and reasoned with them. Not infrequently I have

been moved to tears by my own eloquence. And when I departed, leaving them alone with their conscience, they fell to shooting marbles on the ebony table. So I have fallen back on the older methods of child culture. Twice a month I go through the list with the strap of my scimitar."

"A comprehensive undertaking," I said, half to myself.

"Not if you go at it in a businesslike way," he replied. "At first I made use of a modified form of the selective draft, disciplining them from the age of seven to ten on the first day of the week, from ten to twelve on the second, and so on up to the age of sixteen, when I turn them over to the Minister of Secondary Education. Subsequently I changed to the alphabetical arrangement, Abdul to Enver on Mondays, Fatima to Hussein on Tuesdays, etc. I go through the alphabet conscientiously every fortnight, but if you ask me with enthusiasm—no."

"And you find it does the children good?" I said.

"We were speaking of the war," he said. "We have gone into the struggle against Madagascar as into a necessary bit of sanitation. We will see it through, but why should we give way to enthusiasm? It has been a bitter business for those who went in before us; even so will it be for us—a costly and unavoidable duty. So be it. For that matter—"

The Principal Censor plunged through the curtains and tripped over a footstool.

"Sire," he cried, "there is a traitor in our midst. The enemy knows that one of our transports has sailed."

The Caliph frowned.

"Have you guarded the secret well?" he demanded.

"Implacably, oh Indispensable One," cried the Principal Censor. "With the exception of 542 conductors and brakemen, 75 Pullman porters, 678 baggage smashers, 1,500-odd stevedores, 12,000 editors, and the people who commute from across the Tigris between six and nine in the morning, say, 40,000 citizens at most, not a living soul has had even the suspicion of what the Minister of War was about."

The Caliph stroked his beard thoughtfully.

"Tell me this, oh Hajji Ali," he said, addressing himself to the Principal Censor, "is there even one among my Ministers and servants concerning whose activities the enemy is not well informed?"

"Majesty," cried the Principal Censor, "there is I. Frequently I am myself at a loss as to just what I am about; how much less the enemy who—"

"It is well," said the Caliph. "Go back to thy secrets, Hajji Ali." And when the latter was gone, "Sinbad," he said, "has it ever occurred to you that enthusiasm is usually fifty years or more after the event?"

"Now that you mention it, Sire," I said.

"I have been reading of late in the history of the people of the United States," said the Caliph. "And it would plainly appear that in their war of liberation against the Britons the armed forces of the United States were principally engaged in running away—so the learned historian tells me—while the civil population speculated in depreciated currency and jumped land titles. Is that true?"

"Majesty," I said, "I have been brought up partly on Latin and Greek and partly on the Gary system, and I

know nothing of the history of the country in which I was born."

"Later I read," he continued, "that in the great Civil War for the preservation of the United States there was much discontent, contractors' graft, sedition, and bounty-jumping. Yet the Britons were beaten in 1776 and the nation was preserved in 1861."

"Far be it from me to question the dates," I said.

"As a matter of fact," said the Caliph, "it would not be a difficult matter to stimulate enthusiasm if one went at it the right way. The question is what is the right way. We discussed it in Cabinet council, where two contrary opinions developed. The Grand Vizier and the Minister of Horticulture were in favor of scaring the people to death. The Ministers of War and Statistics insisted upon a policy of tickling the people to death. We effected a compromise—the Scarers to give out their special interviews on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and the Ticklers on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. We reserved Sunday for modifying and explaining all statements issued during the preceding six days."

"An ingenious scheme," I said, cautiously steering my way, "yet—"

"It didn't work at all," said the Caliph sadly. "The Scarers began by announcing that all our battleships had a heavy list to starboard and that there was a scarcity of ponchos for the infantry. Thereupon the Bagdad *Buzzer* demanded why we were going into war unprepared. Next day the Ticklers declared that the enemy was in the throes of defeat, and people wrote in to ask what was the use

of our coming in at the finish. So we dropped the whole scheme."

"But, Magnificent One, will men fight without enthusiasm?" I said.

"I'd rather have them fight with determination," he replied. "You see, Sinbad, this isn't golf we are going in for, but a job; a trying, disagreeable, necessary job, like working for one's living. Besides"—the Caliph smiled into his beard—"you are a married man, Sinbad?"

"I have the best wife in the world," I said.

"Even so. And on occasion you have been dispatched after midnight to investigate suspicious noises in the cellar?"

"It has occurred," I said. "Kismet!"

"And you have crawled downstairs without enthusiasm because it was a nuisance?"

"Quite so, Majesty."

"Suppose, now, you did find the midnight intruder. You would not remain indifferent?"

"Indifferent is scarcely the word," I said.

"Conceivably you might develop an active resentment against the man who compelled you to get out of bed on a cold night, especially if there were chairs misplaced in the dark?"

I bowed before his subtlety.

"Incomparable One, you have said it."

STORY OF THE CALIPH AND APAWAMIS

SOMETHING is at work in his Majesty's mind which I should hesitate to put into words even if the Principal Censor allowed me to; so momentous are its implications, not only for Mesopotamia and her allies, but for the future of all civilized government.

From many sources I have recently heard that his Majesty is not giving his whole heart to the conduct of the war. He sits absorbed at the sessions of the War Cabinet and rouses himself with a start to vote automatically "yes" or "no." On several occasions he has expressed a fervent desire for peace almost on any terms, which is quite out of consonance with the spirit and ideals in which he embarked on the great enterprise. On this point all the Cabinet members are agreed, the Grand Vizier, the Minister of Fine Arts and Irrigation, the Minister of Unfermented Foods, the Minister of High and Low Finance, and the Under-Secretary for Classical Education.

I asked the Grand Vizier when he first noticed the change in his Majesty's sentiments, and the Grand Vizier said about three weeks ago, or, to be precise, the day after the arrival of his Majesty's first set of golf sticks, ordered by wireless from London and conveyed to Basra from Suez by the fastest destroyer in the Mesopotamian navy and

thence up the Tigris by hydroplane. The very next day an important meeting of the War Cabinet had been called to discuss (1) an embargo on figs and dates, and (2) the rapid fall in the value of the Madagascar mark, which latter the Minister of High and Low Finance described as an event of the utmost significance. But the Caliph adjourned the meeting to the following day, "for reasons perhaps best known to yourself, Sinbad," said the Grand Vizier, looking me straight in the eye.

I made no attempt at evasion and concealment. That day I had escorted the Caliph to the links, which had been begun and completed within ten days by detailing to the task two brigades of the Royal Engineers and a division of the Home Defense League. There was a show of criticism in the Opposition press, but it was quickly suppressed by the Principal Censor, who learned the game at St. Andrew's. The Principal Censor himself was too busy that day to undertake his Majesty's first lesson, being then engaged in cutting out from the dispatches all references to the Atlantic Ocean, and it fell to me to act as the Caliph's mentor.

"And, Sinbad," said the Principal Censor, "for the occasion I designate you as Special Deputy Censor with complete authority over everything you may chance to see and hear."

"A censor on the golf links?" I said.

"No precautions must be overlooked," said the P. C. "His Majesty, of course, will only be referring to the ball or to some tree that may chance to get into the way. But his remarks may be overheard, misinterpreted, and imme-

diately transmitted to Madagascar, where they will be seized upon as proof that the war is going ill for Mesopotamia and that the royal temper is cracking under the strain."

As a matter of fact, P. C. spoke like a fool. On the links, as well as off, his Majesty was always the gentleman and the monarch. As I teed up, he lifted a kindly finger and remarked: "Sinbad, remember now, no diplomacy!"

"Royal Delight," I said, "diplomacy? I am a plain newspaper man, and I say only what comes first to my mind."

"I mean that you are to put up your very best game, Sinbad," he said. "I won't stand for calculated indiscretions."

I did my best to obey, but an unforeseen difficulty arose with the caddies. To them his Majesty on the golf links was still his Majesty, and the thought of his defeat at the hands of a foreign and infidel scribbler was not to be tolerated. Wherefore the caddies, both the Caliph's and mine, began to practise frightfulness. They manipulated the balls with an expert heel-and-toe motion, mine into the rough and the Caliph's out of the ditch. They dropped balls from their pockets, the Caliph's on the further side of the pond and mine backwards into the water. And they counted systematically, adding a stroke to the hole for Sinbad and subtracting two from the Caliph's score.

At the fifth hole the Caliph caught on, and a new brace of caddies was requisitioned. Automatically they fell into the same procedure, and for the first time I saw the glint of wrath in the royal eye.

I interceded for the boys. "It is a very comprehensible case of loyalty, Topmost One," I said.

"Nevertheless, Sinbad," he said, "I insist upon a caddy who will act up to his duty and conscience, fearing neither Caliph nor Vizier, neither God nor man."

I thought for a moment and said: "My journalistic experience, oh Merciful, has been gained entirely in America, but if analogy counts, I should say that perhaps a couple of office boys from the Bagdad *Buzzer* would nearest answer the description."

And so it turned out. But I have wandered from the original point which concerns the Caliph and the War Cabinet. At that meeting, therefore, after the Caliph's first game, the monarch sat silent, sketching idly with a pencil upon the margin of a model Defense Loan bond, while the Minister of High and Low Finance spoke of the decline of the Madagascar mark. It was the Minister's opinion that if the mark continued to depreciate another ten per cent., it would mean disaster for Madagascar; yes, it would mean Revolution in the enemy's country—the Minister of Finance was exultant.

The Caliph looked up quickly. "Revolution?" he said. "Where?"

"In Madagascar, your Majesty," said the Minister of Finance.

"Oh," said the Caliph, in obvious disappointment, and then as the eyes of the Cabinet turned curiously upon him, he blushed. The Grand Vizier showed me the sketch that the Caliph had been engaged upon while the Minister of Finance was speaking. It showed in rough outline an im-

proved form of putter, leaded near the tip, and longer by an inch than the club his Majesty had employed yesterday with but indifferent success.

"Now, what does all this mean, Sinbad?" said the Grand Vizier. "On no less than three occasions since then his Majesty has asked me whether there were any chance of a revolution here in Mesopotamia. I assured him no. He seemed disappointed. He has also asked the Minister of Finance whether there were any signs of a breakdown in our national credit leading to popular dissatisfaction, and when the Minister of Finance said no, his Majesty again looked discontented. He has also asked the Minister of War what is the outlook for a military scandal of sufficient proportions to bring about a popular uprising, and when the Minister of War declared there was absolutely no such scandal in sight, his Majesty shook his head sadly and walked away. Now, what does this mean?"

I had a glimpse of what it might mean only this morning, when the Caliph came into my office, just off the Bureau of Engraving and Sociology, and sat down on the edge of the typewriter desk.

"Sinbad," he said, "I shall never get my score down to go while the war lasts. What with the War Cabinet and the administrative bureaus, I am kept busy five hours in the day. For that matter, when peace comes, it will not be much better. The responsibilities of kingship are many. On the other hand, look at what has happened to Nicholas of Russia; absolutely no worry and all the time he wants."

He looked straight in front of him.

"But, Sire, your game is improving," I said.

"I don't imagine I shall ever make an 85 if I keep at it to the end of my life, Sinbad. I haven't the time for practice. The people of Mesopotamia are terribly loyal."

He sighed.

STORY OF THE TROUBLED FOUR

SHORTLY after the declaration of war against Madagascar, the Commander of the Faithful was walking with his sword-bearer after nightfall in the outskirts of the capital, when his ears were suddenly assailed by the sound of lamentation emanating from a little group of citizens dispersed upon the steps of an old mosque in various attitudes of grief. They were four in number.

Addressing himself to the one of the four who seemed to have the firmest control over his emotions, a portly merchant of middle-age, in a silk hat with a garden rake across his knees and a package of seeds and a watering-pot in his arms, "Bismillah," said the disguised monarch, "why this effluxion of woe at a time when all good men should cheerfully be mustering for the service of Caliph and country?"

The citizen in the silk hat thereupon proceeded, without letting go either the seeds or the watering-pot, to smite his breast with his fists, a performance which elicited a glint of admiration from the dusky eyes of the royal sword-bearer.

"Sympathetic strangers," said he of the silk hat, "you have hit upon the crux of the tragedy. Personally I am bewailing the vagueness of the farmer and the treachery of the soil, in this hour of crisis."

"Now by the beards of the Board of Estimate, that is

an extraordinary way of putting things. Speak!" said the Caliph, and he squatted on the mosque steps at the elbow of the man with the silk hat.

"I am only too happy to explain," said the latter. "Up to the outbreak of the war I was a trafficker in securities and contingencies in the Street of the Golden Wall. In my day I have sold short and I have bought long and sometimes I have played both ends against the middle, and so I prospered. Nevertheless, when war was declared I reduced my office hours to a minimum, purchased a large plot of ground on the other side of the Tigris, and prepared to do my bit, as the Koran puts it, for the nation's food supply."

"For this thou shalt have honor in this world and glory in the bosom of the Prophet," said the Caliph solemnly.

"Let me be frank," said the man of the silk hat. "While I am sincerely anxious to do my best for the country, there was an auxiliary reason. I frequently wearied of my trade in the Street of the Golden Wall and found myself longing for the eternal simplicities and realities. Ours is after all a precarious and unsubstantial occupation. We deal in credits, promises, futures, hypotheses, discounts, and all matter of vague commodities. Now, I said to myself, compared with these shadowy objects, what is the most substantial, real, tangible, definite thing there is? And the answer was obviously, Earth, the good, fresh soil, which no Board of Directors, or merger, or pool, or decision of the Supreme Cadis can alter or take away. And I said to myself, in contrast with my own speculative trade, what is the most definite, tangible, real occupation? And the an-

swer was obviously, the farmer's. Kismet. It was not to be."

"And wherefore?" said the Caliph.

The merchant deposited the watering-pot and the package of seeds on the ground, rested the rake against the wall of the mosque, removed his hat and hung it on one of the prongs, and wiped his brow.

"The vaguest, obscurest, most hesitant and uncertain of human beings is the tiller of the soil," he said. "A farmer knows neither time nor space nor the weather. Ask him what is the distance to the village of Hammadiéh and he will reckon that he really couldn't say, but after you had walked quite a piece it might be perhaps half a camel's journey. Ask him how large a farm he cultivates, and he tells you he has never stopped to calculate, and there is besides the new pasture on the other side of the road; though there is no apparent reason why the new pasture should prevent him from making his calculation. Ask him what is his yield for the acre, and he says that it varies a good deal, but he will not tell you the maximum and minimum of variation. Ask him whether it will rain in the night, and he says that it is very hard to tell at this time of the year."

"Distressful citizen," said the Caliph, "you are judging from the standpoint of the curious, febrile, talkative denizen of the towns. What matters it to the farmer whether the village of Hammadiéh lies six miles beyond his domain or twelve? In either case the village will be there when one gets there. What matters all this speculation about acreage and croppage? If Allah wills there will be enough

to pay the interest on the mortgage; if not, not. Selah."

But he of the silk hat was not listening.

"You see a rural child playing about on the threshing-floor," he said. "You smile at her and ask her father how many are the children the will of Allah has bestowed on him. Now you would imagine his knowledge of that would be fairly definite. But he only ponders and replies that there are quite a good many if you reckon Selim, who lives down yonder by the Shaat-el-Mustapha, and if you count Fatima—he calls her Fatimmy—who is married to the keeper of the caravanserai down in Hammadieh. Now I ask you, is a son any the less a son because he lives quite a ways down towards the Shaat-what you may call it, and is a daughter any the more a daughter because she is married to an innkeeper on the other side of the Tigris?"

In a new outburst of grief he reached up to his gray locks and tore out a handful. This seemed to quiet him and he proceeded:

"As to the tilling of the soil itself, honorific stranger, it is the most speculative business there is. I have bought and read garden books and I know. Either the garden has too much acid or too much alkali; in either case one may count upon a superfluity of insect pests and fungi. Then there are the vicissitudes of rain, snow, frost, hail, drought, flood, sun, cloud, thunder, and the chance that a bumper crop in Baluchistan will knock the bottom out of the market and compel you to feed your millet to the camels."

He wept bitterly and we sat silent until his grief might abate, which it ultimately did.

"And that," he said, "oh well-mannered and attentive stranger, is the source of my woe. Can it be that after all I have given up the comparative security of my occupation in the Street of the Golden Wall for a gamble in the suburbs? And more than that, am I, in the present hour of national emergency, doing my best for my country by taking chances on a truck farm when I might be rendering substantial service by selling Spring barley short in my office? By returning to my familiar field of operations I can render to my country, in the form of excess profits tax, a thousand times the value I can extract from the ground in the form of food. That is the sorrow which gnaws at my heart. I have spoken."

At this moment there arose one of his companions who had hitherto been silent, and he tore his outing shirt in two and cried, "What is your grief to mine—"

But of that later.

STORY OF THE TROUBLED FOUR (Continued)

THE Caliph, as became a man of tact and discernment, waited courteously until the second stranger had finished rending his shirt and beating his head against the steps of the mosque, a process which seemed to afford him considerable relief.

Then, in a voice of commiseration and wonder, "Tell me, Disconsolate Inhabitant," he said, "who are you and what grief impels you, in these times of war, to destroy a garment which, at the very least, might be converted into two dozen tobacco pouches for our brave men in the training camps? "

The other replied in a voice that still showed the effects of the violent exercise in which he had been indulging, "I am, oh Inquirer, a delegate to the National Council of Elders from the Thirteenth Bagdad District. I am looking forward to the imminent arrival of a Commission from our ally, the Government of Russia. And I am torn in two between the correct pronunciation of Tchkheidze and regret for my neglected education. When the time arrives for filing past the Russian commissioners and shaking hands, what am I to say to them in their native tongue? "

"It is a grave problem," said the Caliph thoughtfully,

"though I am under the impression that the accent in the Russian language is usually on the twelfth syllable from the end."

"Even so," said the unhappy stranger. "Only none of the words in my Russian vocabulary answers to that description. I know 'samovar,' and I know 'Duma,' and I know 'caviar'; but I ask you, are these enough to express the pride and the confidence I experience in welcoming the coöperation of the Russian people in the struggle of democracy against autocracy? There is only one possible answer."

"You were speaking of a neglected education," said the Caliph. "If in your youth you were deprived of the opportunities for self-improvement—"

The stranger wiped the tears from his eyes and shook his head.

"Oh, I was educated all right," he said. "I learned how to bound Bolivia and Nova Zembla and how to determine the physiological effects of alcohol. I passed my examinations in adenoids, comparative literature, and how many square yards of wall paper are necessary to paper a room without covering the floor and the windows. Later I became acquainted with the structural difficulties of Cæsar's bridge across the Rhine, a subject complicated by the fact that the bridge was chiefly built in the ablative absolute. I was taught how many parasangs the Greeks marched from a town that has been in ruins for two thousand years to a place that was never of any importance. I read 'L'Abbé Constantin' and 'La Bataille des Dames,' but

the other day, when we were preparing to receive Joffre Pasha—”

The Caliph touched his jeweled turban.

“A great warrior, though an infidel; Allah deal with him according to his deserts,” he said.

“When we were told that we should have a chance to shake Joffre Pasha’s hand and speak to him in his own language,” went on the Elder from the Thirteenth Bagdad District, “I was in a panic. What good to me were all my efforts with the irregular verbs in the language of the French? I could neither understand the man nor speak to him. In my trouble I consulted one of my fellow-Elders, from a back-country district near Baluchistan, where the people practise a broad humor often bordering on frivolity. It had occurred to me that I might stop in front of our distinguished visitor and shout ‘Vive le Joffre!’ But this friend of mine, El Djones, shook his head and said the secret service men might interfere.

“‘But you might do this,’ said El Djones; ‘you don’t have to deliver an oration, you know. Just shake his hand and say, “Bapaume, n’est-ce pas?” or something felicitous like that. It’ll show him you have been following up his work.’

“But that hardly seemed appropriate. ‘If only I could recall a phrase or two from “L’Abbé Constantin,”’ I said. ‘Only that’s the curse of modern education.’

“‘But you remember *something*?’ said El Djones.

“‘Yes,’ I said bitterly, ‘I remember Do you have the umbrella of the sister-in-law?’

“‘That’s all right,’ said El Djones. ‘Joffre Pasha won’t

know what you are saying to him anyhow. And if he does, so much the better; he might answer you. Say to him, "Bonjour, Marshal Joffre, do you have the umbrella of the sister-in-law?" and he'll smile and probably say, "No, but I have the goat of the Kaiser," or something equally reassuring.' And here El Djones slapped his leg and said it wasn't a bad joke at that; which is the manner of these people from out Baluchistan way.

"At any rate, I left him and sought counsel from another of my fellow-members, Beg Bey Baw-stan, who came into his French irregular verbs by inheritance. He offered generously to write out a sentence or two in the language of the French which I might commit to memory. I was grateful, but declined.

" 'That would scarcely come from the heart,' I said.

" 'True, if odd,' remarked Beg Bey Baw-stan. 'But why not wait till this other emissary of the French, this Sub-Vizier Viviani, has spoken? Something might occur to you in the meanwhile.'

" 'I am afraid I sha'n't understand him, either,' I said.

" 'Just keep an eye on me,' said Beg Bey Baw-stan, 'I'll tip you off.'

"It was handsome in him. While the Sub-Vizier Viviani was speaking, I kept my eyes glued on Beg Bey Baw-stan, and when at the end of an impassioned sentence, delivered with all the native eloquence of the French, Beg Bey broke out in laughter, I went him one better. A good many of our fellow-Elders followed our example. Later I discovered that Beg Bey's amusement was evoked by Sub-Vizier Viviani's statement that in the last six months his coun-

trymen had laid down 643,253 additional acres in buck-wheat.

"At any rate, so absorbed was I in Beg Bey's appreciation of the Sub-Vizier Viviani's speech that I forgot all about my salutation to Joffre Pasha. And then the line formed and we began to march past."

The stranger bent his head and was silent.

"Error is human and Allah is the Compassionate," said the Caliph; "what did you say to this great Infidel?"

The stranger stifled a sob:

"I said, 'Hooray, Joffre, *merci beaucoup!*'"

The Caliph's sword-bearer snickered and was checked by a stern glance from his master.

"But that wasn't half bad," said the Caliph.

The stranger refused to be comforted.

"Well, perhaps I got away with it that time," he said.

"But what will happen when the Russians come?"

STORY OF THE WOMEN WHO STOOD STILL

DUTY alone took me away from Bagdad when I least wanted to go. The Food Conservation Bill was being debated in the House of Elders. Only fifty-seven more speeches twelve hours long and thirty-two unconstitutional amendments stood between the bill and the Caliph's signature, an event on which I had set my heart to witness. However, because of the sultry weather, several members of the House of Elders lost the drift of their own remarks when they were just in sight of the peroration about Mesopotamia First and had to start all over again. So it turned out that I lost nothing because of my absence from Bagdad, and in a sense did enjoy a refreshing holiday.

The circumstances of my departure were curious. I returned early one morning to my quarters in the palace, hard by the Bureau of Engraving and Polar Exploration, from an all-night session of the House of Elders where an acrimonious debate was under way on an amendment to the Food Conservation bill providing for the erection of an astronomical observatory at Nineveh. On my table I found a telegram. It was dated the night before at the capital of Turkestan and it said, "Come at once—Hassan." It was from the young Khan whose wedding I had but lately attended here in Bagdad.

Immediately I sought out the Commander of the Faithful, whom I found practising with his new patent putter on

the golden carpet in the Hall of the Thousand Anchorites. He read the disturbing missive, shook his head sadly, and remarked: "It's about Ayesha. You had better go, Sinbad."

"But if it be the Princess who is in need," I said, "perhaps your Majesty himself—"

"No, Sinbad," he said; "it's about Ayesha, all right, but it's Hassan who needs you. I have been expecting this for some time."

In the early afternoon of the third day I was in the Turkestan capital. I bestowed my luggage at a caravanserai where the scribe offered me a room with a lapis-lazuli bathtub at twelve sequins a day, and I said one at two sequins would do. He said, "Very well," and ran a comb through his perfumed beard, and I left him and made my way to the palace of the Khan.

Before the gates of the palace a multitude was gathered. When I had pushed my way through the throng I saw two women who stood sentinel on either side of the gates and held aloft large banners of white on a cross staff. As I looked closely at one of the women, I knew her, even through her veil.

"Your Royal Highness," I stammered.

"Even so," said Ayesha, but she neither smiled nor yet gave any other sign of recognition.

"And these banners?" I said.

"Read," she replied.

I read the inscription on one banner and it said: "Six Million Women in Turkestan are in Fetters." And I read

the inscription on the other banner and it said: "Make Turkestan Safe for Its Mothers." And I asked the Princess Ayesha, now Queen of Turkestan, what it all meant, and she said: "I am picketing, Sinbad."

"Against whom, Royal Highness? "

"Against the Government."

"That is to say, against your royal husband, the Khan? "

"Even so, Sinbad."

Much perplexed, I made my way into the palace and was brought into the presence of the young Khan, who graciously raised me from the floor after the fifth prostration only, and said: "Thank you for coming, Sinbad. I am exceedingly unhappy. You saw her? "

"Majesty," I said, "whatever may be the Queen's political views and tactics, I am convinced that in her heart you still—"

"Now by the Kumyss-Drinking Dervish of Samarcand," cried the Khan, "but that is the confusion of it all. Two hours in the day Ayesha is my enemy. But when she is through with sentinel duty she appears before me and inquires whether I have been lonely and have I taken my mint tablets. In passing through the gates while she is on her beat I have on occasion tried to address her, but she has refused to recognize me. And on the other hand, at dinner I have sometimes ventured to ask her what ought to be done about woman's rights in Turkestan, and she says: 'Don't let's talk about such things, Hassan; it's so pleasant here.' "

"Pride of the Steppes," I said, "it is indeed confusing."

"It is distracting," said the young Khan. "Sometimes she will come in from sentinel duty and ask me how I feel; and I will say that I have a bad headache. 'Why?' says Ayesha. 'Worrying about you out there in the sun and amidst a gaping crowd.' 'You're a dear,' she will say, and bring me a wet towel for my throbbing temples. On such occasions, Sinbad, I can only ask myself: Am I or am I not a bigamist?"

"It is like the old days in Bagdad, Majesty," I ventured.

He smiled wanly. "Once when she had been at her post for near two hours and I watching her from the window, I recalled that she had eaten little for lunch, and I sent her out some sandwiches. You know the kind women like—a bit of pomegranate jam and an olive between two wafers. She sent them back indignantly. But when she came off duty, she asked for the sandwiches."

"There is a simple way out, Majesty," I said. "Why not give them the vote?"

He gave a proud lift to his chin that reminded me irresistibly of his great ancestor, Genghis Khan, whom, of course, I will not pretend to have met in person.

"I will not be coerced," he said. Then, thoughtfully: "It isn't quite fair, Sinbad. Here they are asking for a man's privileges and they employ a woman's weapons. She knows how it hurts me to have her out there for two hours on the hot pavement; and as for throwing her into prison—well, you can judge for yourself. So I have my Minister of Public Traffic run her in once in so often, and then I have a lot of blank pardons already signed; and thus we live. If she were only permanently in opposition, I could harden my-

self to punishment, out of a sense of national duty. But just as I am about to take action, she comes in, takes off her sash, throws it on the piano, and offers me nougat."

"It is confusing," I said.

"It confuses a great many people. You know, there are two parties among the women themselves. The Maximalists insist that Ayesha has no right to give me a wet cloth when I get a headache from her picketing, but the Minimalists say it's all right. And then there's poor Abdullah."

"You spell that with a double l, Majesty?"

"Yes," he said. "Abdullah is the head watchman of the royal grounds. The other day he appears before me and beats his forehead on the carpet and cries, 'Grant, oh Star of the Oxus, that I may be released from your royal service.' I asked him why and he said his nervous system was breaking down because of Ayesha. As his Queen she expects him to preserve order, and as suffragist she is subject to arrest. 'From 2 to 4 in the afternoon she is under your authority, Abdullah,' I said to him. But he said the other day when his own time-piece showed ten minutes to four, and he ordered her to keep on moving, she showed him her wrist watch and it was two minutes after the hour and he was guilty of *lèse majesté*, which means boiling oil. 'Under the circumstances,' pleaded Abdullah, 'what is a poor cop to do?'"

"Perhaps with a sense of humor," I ventured.

"But I have none," Hassan replied. "Now it's different with that light-hearted Minister of Finance of mine, old Hafiz ben Ali. His wife is in the same picketing squad with Ayesha. Hafiz says that formerly he never saw his wife

because she was so busy. But now he knows where to find her every day between 2 and 4."

"In that case there is only one solution, Majesty," I said. "Give them the vote and make Turkestan Safe for Its Fathers."

STORY OF THE COST OF LIVING

THE circumstances under which an offer of the post of Minister of High and Low Finance for Mesopotamia was recently made to the writer were as follows. I recount the fact in no spirit of personal exultation, but merely to show how far-reaching is the influence of the press.

No newspaper story of modern times, I have been told, ever attracted as much attention as my recent dispatch in which I described the sinking of five million tons of Mesopotamian shipping by the Madagascar submarines in the course of a month. Inasmuch as the entire merchant marine of Mesopotamia has never exceeded two and a half million tons, one will understand the sensation which my dispatch created in Bagdad. There was a demand for investigation in the House of Elders, the Minister of the Navy suffered a severe nervous breakdown and took to bed and my dispatch must have come to the Caliph's attention.

At any rate, early one forenoon, the Commander of the Faithful, having holed out in three on the difficult fourteenth, which is one below par, and having addressed his customary brief prayer of thanks in the direction of Mecca, turned to me and said, "Sinbad, does the difference between twelve million sequins and fifteen billion sequins strike you as very important?"

I said, "Majesty, I am a plain newspaper man, and three billion dollars one way or the other means nothing to me."

"How, then," said the Caliph, "would you like to be Minister of Finance in my Cabinet? "

"You are jesting, Illuminated One," I said; but his Majesty went on to explain.

It would seem that on the preceding day the Minister of High and Low Finance had a long audience with his Majesty. In the course of this interview it appeared that the war expenditure up to date had reached the sum of fifteen billion sequins, that the daily expenditure was now running about forty million sequins, and that the national debt at the end of the war would probably stand at forty billions. Thereupon the Commander of the Faithful, who had been listening rather intermittently, interrupted to ask the Minister of High and Low Finance what progress he had made with the Summer Vacation Loan project.

The Summer Vacation Loan was a pet scheme of his Majesty's. It called for a bond issue of twelve million sequins to pay for a two weeks' vacation for every head of a family in Bagdad who could not afford a holiday on his own account.

"I have often thought, Sinbad," said the Caliph, "what it must mean to the average laborer to go through his three-score years and ten without a bit of playtime in that whole long span, without a respite save that which comes to him from ill-health and enforced idleness. My Minister of Statistics and Elaboration has estimated that there are 400,000 such deserving citizens in Bagdad and that they could be sent away for two weeks to the Baluchistan hills or to Basra-by-the-Sea at a cost of thirty sequins per head."

The Minister of High and Low Finance shook his head

and said that the thing was out of the question. There was the war to think of, and after that there would be the problem of bringing back the finances of the country to a peace basis. To the latter task, he hinted, his Majesty should be giving much thought.

Thereupon the Caliph smote his hand on the table with such violence that the Principal Censor stuck his head through the door and asked if it was something that ought to be written up for the press. But his Majesty told him not to be a fool, and, addressing the Minister of High and Low Finance, he said, "Know you what, Ali ben Daoud? I think it were better for the people of Mesopotamia if we never get back to a peace basis."

"Unquestionably your Majesty is right," said the Minister of Finance, "if only I understood the drift of your remarks."

"It is very simple, Ali ben Daoud," said the Caliph. "Do you remember how on one occasion, some time before the war, I wanted two million sequins to erect a public bath-house in the workmen's district in Bagdad? You said then that the thing was impossible because it would send the tax rate up one and one-half points to 2.2345."

"You have spoken, Undeniable One," said the Finance Minister.

"You will also remember that when I suggested a minimum wage of three sequins a month for the little girls in the Euphrates cotton mills—that was also before the war—you said that the State could not assume an expenditure which might run up to five million sequins a year for the whole country."

"That was my firm conviction, Majesty," said the Minister of Finance.

"But only just now," continued the Caliph, "you recommended an appropriation of thirty million sequins for the construction of a system of water tanks to supply the camels that drag the timber that is to go into the new medical school that is to train the doctors that are to examine the recruits that are to take part in the expedition against Madagascar. Why is five million sequins in peace time too much for the children, and why is thirty million sequins in war time a meager appropriation for the camels?"

"The answer, oh Unapproachable One," said the Minister, "is very simple. It is because of the unavoidable effect of the short-term non-convertible bonds on the prevailing rate for call money arising from the depleted silver reserve in Patagonia."

"To be sure," said the Caliph. "I never thought of that."

"And besides, your Majesty," said the Minister of High and Low Finance, "is it proper, is it just to burden the future generations with taxes to pay for public baths and minimum wages for the present generation? We must not be selfish. We must think of our children."

The Caliph waved his hand in fine impatience.

"I'll tell you what, Ali ben Daoud," he said. "On this subject of our duty to our children there is altogether too much of what Sinbad's infidel countrymen in their quaint vernacular call 'bull.' When there is something we very much like to do we make it out to be a duty to our children.

And when there is something we are disinclined to do we discover that it is our duty to our children not to do it. That is what the rascal Nubar Dowleh said when we caught him stealing from the Paymaster's funds; he said he was providing for his children; only the dancing girls in the bazaar could tell another story. As a matter of fact, in the course of my private investigations with Mesrour I have discovered that those of my subjects who love their children most, namely, the poor, are the ones who neglect to provide for their future."

"Who shall question the will of Allah?" muttered the Minister of Finance.

"But suppose my Vacation Loan does impose a burden on the future," insisted the Caliph, riding his hobby furiously. "Why is it different from the war taxes which the future generations will have to pay? Put it this way, Ali ben Daoud. Why should we be so watchful of our pennies when it comes to the cost of living, and pour out our billions when it concerns what you might call the cost of dying?"

"The reply is obvious, oh Strenuous One," said the Minister of Finance. "All you have to do is to multiply the bank discounts by the rate of exchange at Amsterdam and subtract the quotations on steel billets, f. o. b., at Babylon."

"I never thought of that," said the Caliph. "Only it seemed to me that if future generations did not object to paying taxes on forty billion sequins which represent the cost of making the world safe for our children, they might

not object to paying taxes on a twelve million Vacation Loan which would make our children safe for the world, by giving them a healthier set of fathers."

"Economic heresy, Sire!" said the Minister.

The Caliph sighed. But if he was convinced for the moment, later his doubts returned. He told me so when he made me the offer of Ali Ben Daoud's job. "He will do well enough for the war, Sinbad," said the Caliph. "But when peace comes I want to go on thinking in billions."

"But, Ineffable One," I protested. "Your people will not permit it. Me, an ignorant stranger and an Infidel!"

"That's the kind of financier I need," he sighed. "Fore!"

STORY OF THE WOMEN WHO DID NOT STAND STILL

“**N**O chance of its clearing up, Sinbad?” said the Caliph.

We were under a tree near the fifteenth green, his Majesty, the Principal Censor, and I, and the rain was falling in sheets. The Principal Censor had been playing our best ball and was 2 up. The Caliph sighed.

“Personally I shouldn’t mind playing it out,” said the Caliph. (It was his third match since he had taken up the game.) “After all, what’s a little moisture? How about it, P. C.?”

“Your Mightiness has only to command,” said the Principal Censor. “Nevertheless, it is the truth that I am extremely susceptible to colds in the head, and I hate to take quinine in the present national emergency.”

“Be it so,” said the Caliph, recalling perhaps the short seventeenth over the irrigation canal, where he regularly came to grief. “Though I should have made it in less than 100. What is the record for the course, P. C.?”

“It’s blank yards, your Majesty, and it has been done in blank,” said the Principal Censor, out of force of habit.

The Caliph sighed, but not in discontent, I thought. Just as the storm broke he had run down a thirteen-foot putt for a three. So for a time we stood there with our

backs to the trunk of the mighty palm, wrapped in our mackintoshes, and thinking, as men always do in the face of nature's magnificent manifestations, of nothing at all.

Then, "Sinbad," said the Caliph, "know you what G. V."—now G. V. is what we call the Grand Vizier when he is not present—"would have me do now? He is all for letting the women of Mesopotamia vote henceforth; vote for everything. He says their services since we went to war have proved their fitness for the suffrage."

"The women of Mesopotamia have done nobly," I said, "though it may be questioned whether a step so far-reaching, so to speak, and yet when one considers—"

The Caliph laughed out loud.

"You are making a noise like a diplomat, Sinbad," he said. (It is a regrettable fact that ever since his Majesty took up golf his vocabulary has been losing in refinement.) "It is true that our women have rallied magnificently to country and flag. But does it surprise you as much as it does the Grand Vizier?"

"Illustrious," I said, "I am but a plain newspaper man. Everything surprises me."

"Take, now, the case of old P. C. here," said the Caliph, patting the other on his shoulder. "Suppose I insisted on playing out the eighteen holes and P. C. went home with the snuffles. His good wife Bathsheba would immediately put his feet into hot water and mustard and give him some warm milk with figs to drink. She would then wrap him up in blankets and give him aspirin. Suppose, now, that the next morning P. C., feeling much better, but still a little rocky and sentimental, called his wife unto him and said,

‘ Oh, Bathsheba, thou art indeed one among ten thousand; for when I came home with a cold in the head thou didst give me milk with figs to drink instead of setting me to chop wood for the fire, and thou didst wrap me in woolens instead of making me sleep out on the roof in the rain, and thou didst give me gentle words instead of assailing me with the camel strap. Therefore, do I admit that thou art deserving of much.’ ”

“ Magnificence,” said the Principal Censor, “ not thus would I address my wife Bathsheba; for the occasion would not be special; and if I did, she would think I had gone out of my mind.”

“ Even so, P. C.,” said the Caliph. “ And the Grand Vizier is talking nonsense when he tells me that the war has proved this or that of our women, or that our women have earned this or that by their behavior during the war. How else, think you, did I expect the women of Mesopotamia to behave? That they should sell secret information to our enemy of Madagascar? That they should fail to go into the fields and the workshops when their husbands and sons and brothers have been called away? That they should fail to go without food when there is less for the children and without sleep—aye, and without new clothes, if it comes to that bitter test? Is it on record before this that women have deserted in the hour of need? For several thousand years women have been taking husbands for worse quite as often as for better, and what new thing has the war shown? ”

“ Yet your allies, the people of Britain, have given the vote to women just on that very ground,” I said, dropping into an argumentative tone of which I should have been in-

capable under other circumstances; but there is something lost to royalty in a raincoat.

"My allies of Britain," said the Caliph, "a great and well-meaning people, have this weakness, that they will do things not for the obvious reason, but for some other reason. They have given the vote to their women because there is absolutely no excuse why they should not have done so long ago; but they like to think it is because of something new about women that the war has shown. The fact is, Sinbad, that this war is not a reason, but an opportunity; it supplies people with an occasion for being surprised at what they have known all along. It will be so with my allies of France. After the war they will give their women the vote in return for the labors and sacrifices which the women of France have rendered. Yet France is the country where bearded men are not allowed to marry without the permission of their *Maman*."

"In Britain it is only women of thirty and over who will be allowed to vote," I said.

"That is the genius of Britain," said the Caliph. "It would kill an Englishman to go all the way at once. He simply will not stand for more than half a loaf; a whole loaf would choke him. No doubt the age limit for women voters in Britain will be lowered in time, but there will always be a provision withholding the suffrage from red-haired women between Whitsuntide and Michaelmas in the Isle of Man, or something like that."

"Yet the war has brought about this change," I insisted. His Majesty showed temper.

"Not by teaching us anything new, Sinbad, but by shak-

ing us up," he said. "If it is right to give the women their vote now, they should have had it long ago. We don't know any more about women now than we did a thousand years ago. Only the war has jarred things wide open. It has shaken old, lazy habits—"

"The trouble has all along been clothes, Unapproachable One," said the Principal Censor.

"How clothes? "

"Pockets, Serenity," said the Principal Censor. "It's been hard to concede equality to a sex that specialized in discomfort. It is impossible to think of the business of the world going on without pockets. By putting on pockets man has had his hands free for climbing the ladder of evolution; but women, no; except on golf coats, where there is no conceivable use for pockets. Or umbrellas, your Majesty. Man gets an umbrella with a crook handle and hangs it over his arm; women must have a straight shaft umbrella to immobilize one hand at least. On the contrary, overalls—"

"P. C.," said the Caliph, "you sound like your dispatches, only more amusing."

STORY OF THE BARMECIDE AND THE AFTER-DINNER SPEAKER

IN the absence of my Reader's Handbook, I do not recall whether it was my namesake Sinbad, or that poor devil Hinbad, or only the Barber's Sixth Brother who was the guest at the original Barmecide's feast. The reader will no doubt recall how that beggar of old Bagdad strayed into the home of the wealthy Barmecide, how he was bidden to take his place at the richly laden table, how priceless plate was set before him—empty, and how phantom dish after phantom dish appeared and disappeared at his host's signal, in a manner distracting to a hungry stomach, though calculated to delight Mr. Hoover. It is a similar personal experience I now have to relate.

The day before the banquet tendered to the special mission from Tegucigalpa by the Bagdad Chamber of Commerce to celebrate the signing of a potash and fisheries convention between the two countries, I was approached by the Principal Censor. Looking about him cautiously and speaking behind his hand, the P. C. offered me two tickets for the banquet, close to the speakers' table and within easy reach of a side exit.

"But I shouldn't dream of depriving you, P. C.," I said.

"It's a clash of duties, Sinbad," he said. "I have tickets for the opening performance of 'The Girl from Kandahar,' and it is essential that I be there."

"You suspect sedition?" I whispered, breathlessly.

"I can hardly say what I suspect," he replied. "But I should be derelict in my service to his Majesty and the country if I missed the opening chorus. Besides, Sinbad, it occurred to me that you would be glad of the opportunity to witness some of our most eminent minds in action. You are a serious man, Sinbad, and you represent a serious journal of opinion, and thus are eminently qualified to enjoy an intellectual feast. It is an offer I would not make to every one."

I took the tickets, glanced at the back to see whether the war tax had been paid, and thanked him heartily. In the midst of a reporter's busy life an intellectual feast, such as P. C. promised, was something to look forward to. His only stipulation was that if something happened at the dinner, I should call him up not earlier than ten the next morning.

It was a distinguished assemblage that the first speaker, the Minister of Extraneous Affairs, rose to address. I leaned forward with sufficient eagerness to send a half-filled coffee cup hurtling across the lap of my neighbor, a tall, sun-browned young fellow from the Siamese Embassy. He thrust back his chair with a deft movement of the knees and accepted my apologies courteously.

The Minister of Extraneous Affairs began by saying that the occasion was an historic one. All sources of misunderstanding and irritation between two great peoples had been removed, and in the absence of unforeseen interruptions the two Governments would coöperate in the work of civilization. At this juncture the speaker was irresistibly reminded of the story of the Irishman and his goat, who were crossing

a river in a flat-bottomed skiff, and one of them—presumably the Irishman—made a remark which neither I nor my neighbor from the Siamese Embassy quite caught. The rest of the speech was couched in a serious vein, but when it was over, candor compels me to say that my intellectual appetite still bothered me.

The next speaker was the Ambassador from Tegucigalpa. He made me think of a volume I had recently picked up on the Principal Censor's table. It was called "Fifteen Thousand Familiar Phrases," and the Ambassador from Tegucigalpa used approximately 13,500 of them. He said that co-operation had taken the place of competition; that a man was a man for all that; that eternal vigilance was the price of liberty; that under no conditions would 2 and 2 make anything but 4; that genius was the capacity for taking pains; that Shakespeare was the common glory of mankind, whether Christian or Moslem; and that victory was only a question of time. At this point he was reminded of a colored uncle, named Ebenezer, who was propelling a mule along a lonely road at midnight. When the laughter had subsided he declared that he knew no better way of summing up the status between the two countries than by saying *Nihil humani*, unless it was *Labor omnia vincit*.

It was all pleasant enough, but not quite what one would call intellectually filling. My neighbor from the Siamese Embassy was pulling thoughtfully at a fresh-lit cigar, and when I turned to him for sympathy he smiled in the most eager fashion and handed me the matches. I just had time to thank him before the President of the Vaccination Board got to his feet.

The President of the Vaccination Board asserted, without fear of contradiction, that the world was smaller to-day than ever before and that science had done its share in bringing the nations closer to each other. For conflict we were substituting coöperation; treaties had no validity without the ratification of mutual good will and understanding; and whereas Tegucigalpa had something to learn from Mesopotamia, it was an open secret that Mesopotamia had a good deal to learn from Tegucigalpa. It reminded him of the insurance agent who intercepted the bridegroom on his way to church—

It needed only a brief exchange of glances with my neighbor from the Siamese Embassy, and under cover of the laughter and applause we were out through the side exit and in the open. We walked side by side without speaking until we reached the bank of the Tigris and stopped to look thoughtfully at the yellow waters. Then bracing myself to the question:

“It bored you?” I said.

He looked up in surprise.

“Bored, M’sieu Sinbad? But, no!”

“There was about the speeches,” I said, “a sameness, a lack of relief, a sort of Shredded Turnip feeling”—and I waved my hands as I imagined they do in the best foreign circles.

“At the contrary,” he said, almost somberly. “It made one to remember, painfully; ah, too painfully.” And then, as I showed plainly that I did not understand, “I was on the staff at our War Office, M’sieu Sinbad, for one, two years. I wrote the daily bulletins.”

"To be sure," I said, though this was the first I had heard of the matter.

"I drafted the *communiqués* during those many, many weeks of horror," he went on, scarcely addressing me. "When we were beaten back with very great slaughter I wrote, 'We are proceeding in accordance with prearranged plans and have taken prisoners.' Later I said, 'We have succeeded in rectifying our lines.' Later I wrote, 'South of X. the enemy's advance guard has been repulsed with great loss.' But X. was fifty miles on the wrong side of the position we had occupied three days before. Later I said, 'There is nothing to report.' There was nothing, indeed, which one had the heart to report. It seems impossible that one could have lived through that nightmare and written, as I did, day after day. Ah, the power of words, Sinbad, to say all or nothing—I was reminded to-night."

I put my hand on his shoulder.

"But you never, in your *communiqués*, were reminded of the Scotchman who lost sixpence in Westminster Abbey?"

He seized my hand in both his own.

"Thank you, my friend," he said,

STORY OF THE CALIPH AND THE RENTING AGENT

AYESHA'S telegram was about apartments. So the Commander of the Faithful explained when I read to him the contents of the utterly unexpected message from Turkestan. It said: "Sinbad Bagdad two bathrooms near river three bedrooms southern exposure eternally grateful Ayesha take papa he knows what I like."

"It's this way, Sinbad," said his Majesty. "Young Hassan Khan is coming down to talk over war matters, especially that loan of one hundred million sequins, which will take some time. I understand one of the members of the Chamber of Elders has already given notice that he expects to speak fifty-four hours straight on the loan proposition. He says he is going to prove that if a man started counting sequins at the time of the birth of the Prophet with an hour off for lunch and dinner, it would take him 347 years to count one hundred million sequins. I presume it would take him 347 years if he started at any other time, but that isn't the point. Of course, Ayesha is coming along; and she declines to stay at the palace. She wrote me to tell you to hunt up an apartment for them. Only the thing slipped my mind."

"Indispensable One," I said, not concealing my surprise and concern, "surely naught has arisen between your Majesty and the Princess Ayesha, Allah make her posterity like

the sands of the desert, aye, like the submarine sinkings when five zeros are added by mistake."

"Quite the contrary, Sinbad," he said. "The child writes that Hassan is very good to her and she is happy, but nevertheless she misses me." His Majesty paused and blew his nose violently. "Only yesterday she sent me the most charming prayer rug imaginable, genuine Axminster, and a lotion of marvelous efficacy against falling hair, made of unfermented mare's milk and powdered lapis lazuli. But she says she would rather go into apartments and save the cost of entertainment which her sojourn at the palace would involve, and I am to give the money instead to the Red Crescent."

"But the cost of the apartment, Majesty?" I said.

"You might well ask that," said the Caliph. "Also the cost of sending up several vanloads of furniture from the palace and the cost of a troop of cavalry to keep guard around her domicile. But I never did have a good head for figures. She does insist on a reasonably cheap apartment, and it is for you to find it, Sinbad."

"And your Majesty will deign to accompany me in the hunt, even as Ayesha requests?"

"To tell the truth," said the Caliph, "I was thinking of running out to the links. But the Minister of High and Low Finance has asked for a three hours' audience to discuss excess profits. So I think I will go with you."

The Caliph having assumed the simple dress of a member of the Produce Exchange, we made our way to the booth of a house agent of my acquaintance whose previous occupation had been writing unrimed poetry for the public

sheets, and who had turned to his present calling as a more favorable outlet for his highly developed gifts of the imagination. To him I stated concisely the nature of our requirements.

"The combination of three bedchambers and two bathrooms is quite unusual," he said. "Now, if you had said one bedchamber and three bathrooms, it would be much easier. Of course, one might, without excessive outlay, convert either the kitchen or the living-room into a bathroom."

"Kindly stick to specifications," said the Caliph, with a touch of temper and authority that belied his simple bourgeois dress, so that I had to lay an admonitory hand upon his sleeve. "And it must be near the Tigris," I said hastily to the free-verse writer, in order to divert his attention.

"Do you want to see the river or hear it?" said the house agent.

"Why not both?" I said.

"Because the combination is very rare," he replied. "I have in mind one apartment from the kitchen window of which there is an excellent outlook upon the river and the Bridge of Boats. But it's thirteen stories up with as many intervening pianos. And there is another where the soft lap of the waters and the cries of the boatmen come up delightfully from around the corner, but the outlook is upon a moving-picture theater. However, let us go and see."

Having said this, he rose, donned his kaftan, locked the door of the booth, and hung upon it a sign which said, "Will return immediately." I reminded him that our business might hold him for several hours.

"Oh, that's all right," he said, and we started off. But we had not walked far before he turned around.

"Now, as to the front entrance," he said. "Do you like Hindu Renaissance with elephants and the Goddess Kali, or would you prefer something in Early Chinese with dragons and a pagoda?"

"Is there any essential difference?" asked the Caliph.

"There is three times as much carving in the Hindu, and it naturally comes higher," said the house agent. "Personally I prefer the primitive blues and reds of the Chinese." There, I thought, spoke the poet.

But when we drew up before a magnificent doorway thirty-six feet high, with palm trees in tubs on either side, "Perhaps this will suit you best," said the house agent. "It's our latest composite housekeeping style, with central refrigeration. You see how the architect has combined the Hindu with the Chinese and thrown in just a touch of the Late Kamchatka."

The Caliph stared in awe at the monumental façade.

"Now, by Allah," he said, "who of my—who of his Majesty's subjects can afford to dwell in such regal luxury?"

"Nobody can," said the house agent, "but there is only one apartment vacant."

Inside we were taken in charge by the Second Deputy Administrator and were rapidly lifted to the eleventh floor in a car manipulated by a young woman in simple crimson and gold.

"That would be the effects of the war," said the Caliph, half aloud. "It must be a monotonous life for a woman."

"Yet it is a step away from the confinement of the home

and towards freedom," said the house agent, whom I knew for a poet, but now began to suspect also for a cynic.

The Second Deputy Administrator threw open the door of an apartment and cautioned us to be careful of a sudden corner in the hall. "This gets plenty of light during the summer solstice and shortly before the spring equinox," he said. "At other times we use electricity. There are six rooms altogether, and this self-contained suite of four rooms is the haremlik."

"But why four rooms out of the six for the women?" asked the Caliph.

The Second Deputy Administrator looked at him with a faint touch of pity, and the Caliph's beard began to vibrate. I intervened hastily.

"The prospective tenant is a good Moslem, yet he has but one wife," I said.

The Second Deputy Assistant looked dubious.

"In that case," he said, "we should require unexceptionable financial references. Now, Abdul Malek, across the hall, has four wives, and I believe he is considering a fifth."

"It would be noisy with so many children about," I said. He looked at us with frank astonishment.

"There *are* no children," he said.

STORY OF THE PRINCIPAL CENSOR AND THE ULCERATED BICUSPID

ABOVE the din of a world war the normal demands of life clamor to be heard. Take the toothache, for instance.

I was strolling the other afternoon in one of the quiet streets that lie behind the Grand Bazaar when I grew aware of a familiar form moving feebly some paces in front of me and hugging close the shadow of the garden walls. It was the Principal Censor, whose absence from his duties for several days I had wondered at.

Hastening after him, "Hail, oh Hajji Ali," I said, "and may Allah grant you all the comfort attainable under the present extraordinary conditions of humidity. All is well?"

The Principal Censor glanced at me sideways and upward.

"Ugh, ugh," he said.

"You have been out of town?" I queried, somewhat puzzled by his brevity.

"Mum, mum," he replied, and shook his head. Then, with a start, "Forgive me, Sinbad," he said, "but I speak out of force of habit. Even now I come from the dentist. It is his custom of conversation to ask questions that call for a somewhat detailed reply and immediately thereupon to thrust a cotton wad into your mouth. Under the circumstances, you either reply, 'Ugh, ugh,' or 'Mum, mum.'"

And to be sure, as I looked close, I saw that the side of the Principal Censor's face which he kept concealed in the shadow of the wall was even like the full moon of Ramadan, whereas the opposite cheek suggested a consumptive maiden by Botticelli.

"Believe me infinitely prostrated, Hajji Ali," I cried.

"Not at all, Sinbad," he said. "There's no pain whatever; it's the confounded look of the thing."

"But how came it about?"

"Who shall say?" he replied cheerfully. "Overwork, perhaps."

"Surely, you don't bite things out of the dispatches," I jested feebly.

He was good enough to laugh. "No, but it's wearing on the nerves; a cold draft of air, and there you are. I am really much better."

"And who has been doing your work in the meanwhile?"

"That was quite a problem, Sinbad," he said. "At first I divided it between the Embargo Board and the Bureau of Latitude and Longitude. But they fell out and quarreled. So I hit upon the plan of publishing everything just as it came over the wires, marking it 'Passed by the Censor.' Naturally nobody believed what they read. I flatter myself it was a happy idea."

Suddenly his face darkened.

"I fear complications, Sinbad. I admire Al Firuzd as a man and have little to say against him as a dentist; but his manner of conducting conversation opens the way to misunderstandings. There will be rumors afloat, and if they should come to the ear of the Caliph, it might be unpleas-

ant. Do you mind walking on the other side of me as we cross the street? "

I was glad to do what I could to camouflage that full-blown left jaw, and as we walked he explained. It seems that after three days of intermittent rheumatic disturbances and loss of sleep, his condition obtruded itself on the attention of the Commander of the Faithful.

"What is wrong with you, P. C.?" said the Caliph. "Here are no less than two paragraphs and several rows of figures which ordinarily you would have deleted like a shot."

Thereupon the Principal Censor confessed.

"Drop your work at once and go over to see Al Firuzd," said the Caliph. "Never mind if the enemy finds out a thing or two in your absence."

When Hajji Ali was seated in the dentist's chair, Al Firuzd tilted back his patient's head and said: "Where does it hurt? "

"Here," said the Principal Censor, and drew a line from his ear to his chin and up again to the root of his nose.

Al Firuzd showed just a trace of irritation.

"Are you speaking now as a censor or as a patient?" he said.

"As the latter," said Hajji Ali.

"Then don't try to suppress information; specify, please." But as the Principal Censor made attempt to comply: "Open your mouth," said Al Firuzd, and with the blunt end of his probe he tapped, kindly, but firmly.

"Ugh, ugh," said the Principal Censor.

"Right you are," said Al Firuzd, and picked up his exploring needle.

"Did that hurt?" he asked, after a while.

"Quite a bit."

"I was confident it would," said Al Firuzd.

"Then why," said the Principal Censor, with the suggestion of tears in his eyes, "could you not have taken it for granted?"

But Al Firuzd turned to his instrument desk and busied himself with needles and little bottles of dark fluid, humming to himself gently.

"I've located the trouble," he said. "It's the third maxillary phalange of the second intercostal bicuspid." "And, do you know, Sinbad," said the Principal Censor, "after long concentration upon the subject-matter of a censor's business it was pleasant to hear something so beautifully definite."

At any rate: "Do you know what, Hajji Ali?" said the dentist. "Three months from now there won't be a single Madagascar submarine left in the seven seas, and six months from now there will be peace, on our own terms. We outnumber them now three to one in men and five to one in guns."

"My own opinion, Al Firuzd," said the Principal Censor, "is that—"

"Open your mouth, please. That's it." Al Firuzd inserted a cylinder of absorbent cotton under the upper lip, held up his mirror, studied it carefully and said:

"The food shortage in Madagascar is acute. There are

riots everywhere. Before winter the country will be in full revolt. What do you imagine the Government of Madagascar will do then? ”

“ Ugh, ugh,” said the Principal Censor.

Al Firuzd worked upon him for the space of five minutes, removed the cotton wadding, and instructed him to rinse his mouth.

“ Of course,” said the dentist, “ we shall insist on complete reparation. For Italy we shall insist on Trieste, the Trentino, and the Adriatic coast line—”

“ We certainly shall—” said the Principal Censor.

“ Open your mouth, please,” said Al Firuzd.

It was manifestly unfair, complained the Principal Censor. “ I leave it to you, Sinbad, whether it is right to suppress or distort a man’s words like that. What I was going to say in reply to his statement of Italy’s claims, of course, was, ‘ We certainly shall *not*,’ but he cut me off before the ‘ not.’ And now Al Firuzd goes about and vapors about the war, and quotes me as his authority. Only yesterday he was telling Abu Hassan, chief auditor in the Department of Odds and Ends, that we have two million men in port ready to sail. He said that he had made that statement in my presence and I had not contradicted it. How could I? He had a pound of cotton and iodine in my mouth. As a matter of fact, I did my best. I said, ‘ Ugh, ugh,’ and waved my hands, but all he said was, ‘ It’ll be over in a minute.’ It isn’t fair, it isn’t fair, Sinbad.”

Just then a crowd of young girls passed by, and the Principal Censor opened his newspaper hurriedly and buried his

face in the advertisements. But when we were once more in a deserted byway he returned to his grievance.

"Not that it makes any difference with Al Firuzd if you seize your chance and speak out. I did so on one occasion. He had been wondering how long it would take to send our army across the sea. I looked up into his pleasant, thoughtful countenance, warmed to the kindly gleam in his eye, and, my mouth being free by chance, said: 'Al Firuzd, we have 456 transports with a carrying capacity of 347,685 men and their equipment.' It was a secret for which the editor of the *Buzzer* would have given a year of his life. But Al Firuzd smiled down at me and said:

" 'Open your mouth, please.' "

STORY OF THE CONGESTED WAR WORKERS

FROM no less a source than the Caliph himself I gather that unless traffic congestion in the capital is immediately relieved the whole conduct of the war will come to a stop. It is impossible for the regular members of the Government to move about the streets, the bazaars, and the public offices because of the influx of Men on the Spot. Their number has been estimated by the Bureau of Statistics and Elaboration at something like a quarter of a million. About two-thirds of these, roughly, have come down to find out for themselves how the Government is running the war, and the rest are here to tell the Government how to run it.

Only this morning I was accosted by a stranger who described himself as special correspondent for the Ctesiphon *Morning Glory*. He arrived in town the night before. He said there was only one way of dealing effectively with the Madagascar submarines. You must stretch one chain of electric contact nets between the Cape of Good Hope and the mouth of the Red Sea, another chain from Ceylon to New Guinea, and patrol the rest of the Indian Ocean with wooden submarine chasers equipped with triple expansion oil-burning turbines. He then asked me the way to his hotel at the corner of Fatima Road and the Street of the Obstreperous Camel, saying that he had lost his way no less than seven times since ten o'clock last night.

On the other hand there are special correspondents in town who have been more fortunate. One such, with whom I made acquaintance over a simple meal of fig paste and curds at the eatinghouse of a Thousand Glazed Tiles, told me that he was about to set out on his return trip of three weeks by mule-back to the Kashgar Mountains after a very profitable study of the war at close quarters. He had interviewed everybody worth while, and never failed to secure the "inside hashish," which is a popular phrase for secret and reliable information. The Minister of the Navy, the Minister of Coördination, the Minister of High and Low Finance and the Chief Secretary of Wear and Tear told him, in confidence, that the country was united and enthusiastic for the war, that the army and the navy were ready for any task that might be assigned to them, that the support of Allah was assured, and that the struggle would be carried to a definite and triumphant conclusion in accordance with prearranged plans. "Six weeks on mule-back," said the stranger, "is quite a job, but it was worth it."

I narrated this incident to the Commander of the Faithful, and he smiled grimly. I found his Majesty on the top of the Tower of Abu Bekr, which is, as you know, the highest structure in Bagdad, being 600 cubits high and dedicated in normal times to bridal couples on their honeymoon.

"I have come hither, oh Sinbad," said the Caliph, "for the purpose of obtaining a bird's-eye view of the war. It is either that or running off to the Baluchistan hills for the necessary quiet. As you see, it is comparatively secluded here. It is true that half-way up the Tower I was intercepted by a special correspondent from the Caspian Sea,

who prostrated himself and cried, 'Sire, how about the millet and barley supply, and what are the chances of Russia making a separate peace?' I answered the poor wretch in the affirmative and made my way up. At the next turn I was stopped by a visitor from the coast of Coromandel, who stood on his hands, rolled his eyes, and cried, 'Sire, get busy in the name of Allah!' Still, as I have said, it is restful compared with conditions at the palace. They are four thick under the windows down there."

"Forgive them, oh Altitudinous One," I said. "It is but natural that they should wish to see and learn for themselves."

"I am not blaming them, Sinbad," said his Majesty. "My subjects are entitled to know what we are doing, and particularly in such instances where we do not quite know ourselves."

Now the strange part of it all is this: while hundreds of thousands of earnest investigators are flocking to Bagdad to find out how the war is going on, a great many of the people permanently here on the ground are turning their gaze back home in order to discover just where they stand. I was in conversation the other day with two prominent members of the House of Elders, of whom one holds the long-distance record for debate in that House after speaking sixty-two consecutive hours on no less than thirteen different subjects on two sandwiches of goat's cheese and a glass of milk. I inquired of these statesmen how they would vote on the pending measure for the construction of 40,000 aeroplanes.

"Public opinion in my province is solid for the aeroplanes," said the long-distance Elder. "I have here no less than 4,400 telegrams declaring that the aeroplanes are essential to victory."

"On the other hand," said the second Elder, "I have here 6,100 telegrams insisting that I vote against the aeroplanes and in favor of the wooden submarine-chasers."

"That is extraordinary unanimity in both cases," I remarked.

"Unanimity isn't the word," said the first Elder. "All my 4,400 telegrams agree in denouncing what they call 'fatal delay on a vital issue.' Now how did they all happen to think of that phrase?"

"Every one of my 6,100 telegrams," said the second Elder, "addressed me as Hassan ben Ali instead of Abu ben Ali, which is my right name. Now how did they all happen to make the same error?"

"Public opinion is a wondrous thing," I said.

"It is," sighed the Elders. But this is beside the point.

It is this second Elder, by the way, who has been a prolific source for most of the first-hand information that goes out of Bagdad. Whenever old Abu in the course of his miscellaneous reading happens to stumble across something that strikes his fancy he reads it into the *House Record*. Thereby it becomes Government information and is extensively quoted. It may be a bit of homely poetry or a recipe for preserving figs or a description of sunset on the ruins of Nineveh; it all goes in.

Now, as the Caliph and I were making our descent from

the Tower of Abu Bekr, out of the dusk there leaped a figure in a bathing-suit with a notebook, for it is warm in Bagdad.

"Enlightened One," came a voice from the bathing-suit, "how and when will the war end?"

The Caliph answered gravely:

"Son, the war will end through starvation in about three months, if special correspondents continue to flock into Bagdad at the present rate. The famine-stricken natives of this city will rise and compel me to make peace on the enemy's terms."

STORY OF WHAT THE WOMEN WILL WEAR

A YESHA and her husband did not go into apartments, after all. At the last moment she decided that by going to live with her father in the palace there would be that many taxi fares saved, which she would give to the Red Crescent. The royal residence being heavily congested with an overflow of bureaus and departments from the Army and Navy Building, it seemed at first as if no adequate quarters could be obtained for the visitors. His Majesty was finally compelled to issue an edict abolishing the Bureau of Analytical Geometry, with the result that the young Khan and his wife were soon comfortably installed, and the war went on, if anything, a little better than ever.

Thither his Majesty, accompanied by the present writer, was in the habit of repairing at odd hours for a quiet chat with his son-in-law, of whom he was exceeding fond. Ayesha we saw rarely. The second day after her arrival in Bagdad she joined the local branch of the National Mesopotamian Union for the Enactment of Direct, Equal, Single, Proportional, and Compulsory Suffrage by Imperial Legislation (briefly known as the N. M. U. E. D. E. S. P. C. S. I. L.). The next day she began a campaign for the revision of the by-laws and simultaneously took the first steps towards organizing a Relief Bazaar. After that she discovered that she must have some new clothes.

We entered one afternoon, the Caliph and I, the apart-

ments of the visitors from Turkestan and found the young Khan on a divan in the darkest corner of the room with his head in his hands.

"The peace of the Prophet with you, oh, Hassan," said the Caliph. "Is it the war that troubles your spirits, or are you lonely for Ayesha?"

The young Khan put his finger to his lips and pointed to the curtains that covered the doorway, but before he could speak Ayesha's voice came from behind the curtains: "Is that you, papa?"

"Even so, daughter," replied the Caliph.

"Don't go before I see you," she said. "I will be through in a moment."

A wan smile lit up the countenance of the young Khan as he rose to surrender his seat to the royal visitor.

"The dressmaker is in there, and they are trying on things," he said. "She came at high noon. It is now half an hour to sunset."

The Caliph lifted the stem of the narghili to his mouth, inhaled once or twice, and shook his head in compassion.

"I know, son, I know," he said. "I, too, suffered until I married my seventh wife. Now I order from Paris in car lots, and it doesn't worry me in the least."

"Know you what, oh, One among Fathers-in-Law," said the young Khan. "I am no longer puzzled by the question whether woman can ever take up the hardships of actual warfare. I am convinced that any woman in Bagdad can stand up in a trench forty-eight hours at a stretch, provided she can have another woman kneeling before her with a mouthful of pins."

"Now, by the beard of the Chairman of the Rivers and Harbors Committee, you have spoken the truth, Hassan," said the Caliph. "Only you must not take it so hard. Ayesha will grow older and you will grow wiser and the thing will adjust itself."

"I am not complaining; I am merely puzzled," said the young Khan. "This business of women and clothes is not a frivolity, seeing that they give of their strength and their nerves to it; and yet there are knitting-bags."

"Knitting-bags?" I queried.

"To carry sweaters and socks which you are knitting for the soldiers. Give ear, oh Sinbad. This is from the fashion page of the Bagdad *Buzzer*." And he read:

"'There are knitting-bags of the most expensive of materials. A black satin one has a medallion of blue Chinese embroidery appliquéd conspicuously on its side. One of black and gold brocade has its rings wound with gold galloon and is adorned with tassels of gold. A silk one is made from a Poiret print colored the gayest of red and blue and white. There are bags of lace and ribbon as accompaniments for evening and boudoir gowns. There are also tailored ones of velvet and duvetyn; also those with bright silver and enameled tops for knitting-needles.' Now, what does that sound like to you?"

"It sounds," I said, "like a possible quotation from a speech on the Army Appropriation bill."

But the young Khan had no ears for me.

"Imagine," he said bitterly, but in a low voice, with one eye on the curtains, "what would happen to democracy and self-determination if there wasn't an embroidered

blue Chinese medallion appliquéd on the side. Imagine one of our Mesopotamian boys going over the top without a sweater from a velvet and duvetyn knitting-bag. Imagine what would happen to open diplomacy if Ayesha were to start out for the opera and forget her ribbon and lace knitting-bag with a pair of half-finished socks in it. Why is it, Father-in-Law? Why must Ayesha, with youth, romance, courage, humor, and vision, be unable to face life without gold galloon and an enameled top? ”

The Caliph, continuing to puff at his pipe and stare straight ahead without evincing a desire to speak, I ventured to remark: “ I have read, oh Excellent Prince, that among the birds it is the other way about; for it is the male who is adorned with the gayest of plumage, while the female wears the sober garb. I have been through the School of Journalism, and I know my entomology.”

But the young Khan spoke dryly: “ I haven’t noticed much change in bird fashions for several thousand years; have you? The patterns seem to be pretty constant.”

“ Nevertheless,” I said, nettled, I confess, by the young Khan’s superior manner, “ the male instinct for gay colors persists. Even now I will confess—”

“ Now, don’t tell me, Sinbad, that you have a weakness in that direction,” said the Caliph, with a peculiar glint in his eye.

“ Illustrious One,” I said, “ at all times the sight of a red necktie in a bazaar window threatens to sweep me from my moral foundations.”

“ I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings, Sinbad,” said the young Khan with right royal kindliness, “ but the point I

have been trying to make is not that women's clothes are so frivolously gay, but that they are so frivolously changeable. We men get used to our clothes and like them. When *they* get used to their clothes, it means that they can't stand them any longer, but must have new ones immediately. See now what they lose in life—the ineffable companionship of an old turban which becomes like a part of you, a worn girdle whose every thread calls you brother, the solace of an old pair of slippers. I have noticed that as soon as I think Ayesha is beginning to look comfortable in one of her gowns, she calls it dowdy. Why? ”

“Now that your Excellency speaks of it,” I said, “it is my opinion that the reason is the persistence of polygamous instincts in women.”

They both stared at me, and I should have been unspeakably grateful if at that moment the Principal Censor had appeared through the ceiling and suppressed me. But it was too late to withdraw.

“What I mean is the need for change, renewal, transferred self-expression, Freud-Jung, you know, and that sort of thing,” I stammered.

The Caliph whistled.

“You *are* a biologist, Sinbad,” he said. But it was Ayesha who really cleared up the matter for us as soon as she came in.

STORY OF WHAT THE WOMEN WILL WEAR (Continued)

IT was well on towards the hour of the evening prayer when the Princess Ayesha, having dismissed her dress-maker, joined us in the great hall. To her the Caliph, fondly drawing her to himself, expounded in a few well-chosen words the subject of our discourse.

"Why is it, daughter," he said, "that this sudden onset called Style seizes at regular intervals upon all the women in my realm and causes them to array themselves in garments of exactly the same tint cut on precisely the same lines? "

"It is very simple, papa," said Ayesha. "It is because we are trying to make the world safe for democracy." And as the three of us gazed at her without comprehending, "Hassan, dear," she said, "I have a splitting headache. Couldn't we have some coffee? "

It was some time before, in response to the young Khan's vigorous handclap, the serving-maid appeared, her agile fingers whirling a pair of knitting-needles through the intricate web of a soldier's mitten even while she prostrated herself and waited for orders. But when the coffee was brought the Commander of the Faithful lifted the tiny square of sugar from his saucer and looked inquiringly at his daughter.

"Your hospitality is meager, Ayesha," he said.

"That is as much as the Sugar and Pomegranate Jam Administrator will allow to a cup, papa," she replied.

"But surely in exceptional cases?"

"It is for us to set the example. Hassan takes his coffee straight," she explained as she helped herself to her husband's bit of sugar, which, after the Oriental fashion, she nibbled at as she sipped.

"You were speaking about democracy," said the young Prince, who, like his celebrated ancestor, Genghis Khan, would never drop a topic until he had exhausted it.

"It is quite simple," said Ayesha, dipping into a five-pound bonbon box which she drew from beneath the cushions of the divan. "When all of us simultaneously go in for blue, or cerise, or mustard, this is what happens. You men happen to see a pretty face in blue, or cerise, or mustard"—and here she addressed herself to me, to my infinite embarrassment—"and thereafter when you see a blue or cerise or mustard you at once assume a pretty face; and closer observation fails to undeceive you. This is very fortunate for the homely girl. For how many men are there, oh Sinbad, who can use their eyes for themselves?"

"Highness," I replied, "before I was a foreign correspondent I was a war expert, and before that I frequently helped out on the Woman's Page, and it is even as you say."

"Don't you see, then?" said Ayesha, quite carried away by the sweep of her own argument. "The sight of the first attractive young woman in a blue gown establishes in the masculine mind a permanent blue-pretty association complex

as that dear infidel writer Wullahim Jamis would say in his book on the 'Principles of Psychology,' Volume I."

The Caliph regarded her sternly.

"How do such unknown prints come into your hands, daughter?"

"We studied him in school at Ispahan, papa. He is quite safe. Ask Sinbad; it's one of his own countrymen."

"Is that the truth?" asked the Caliph.

"It is true, Fountain Head of Felicity," I said. "At home we call him James. There were three brothers—William, Henry and Jesse."

"But you know everything, Sinbad," cried the young Khan with unaffected admiration.

"I do, Excellent One," I replied with proper humility. "Only I know it in spots."

"At any rate, papa, you see what I mean," said Ayesha with just a shade of impatience. "Style is democratic because it means all sharing alike. That is why in the countries of the West the fashions are set by the women of the theater, who are all exceptionally beautiful. The idea of beauty becomes attached to a certain color or a certain cut, and we are all of us the better off for that. All for one and one for all, I say."

It may be that the Commander of the Faithful was in ill humor for want of his usual quantity of sugar with his coffee, but he frowned into his beard and muttered: "Now I would give up much, aye, even the Chief Controller of Camel Hides and Bismuth, to know whence you draw your rich store of information concerning the manners of the West."

"I remember what I learned at school, papa," she said. "And I correspond regularly with El Onorina Essmit, of Pittsburgh, whose husband was Ambassador here before I married. Hassan reads all her letters."

"It is so," said Hassan gravely. "The lady El Onorina begins her letter on the last page, continues it on the second, jumps to the first page, and ends on the third. Perhaps that may account for Ayesha's somewhat curious impressions of the customs of the infidel Westerners."

But the Caliph would not be appeased, and, as he puffed at the water-pipe in resentful silence, the young Khan, who had been waiting his opportunity, addressed himself to Ayesha.

"I understand why all of you should wear blue or mustard at the same time," he said. "That is democracy, as you say. But why do you change from blue to mustard and back again with such painful rapidity?"

"Because as soon as one does it everybody else does it," she said.

"Why does the first one do it?"

"If she didn't when everybody else did, she'd only be making herself conspicuous," said Ayesha.

The young Khan ran his palm over his forehead and, picking up his coffee, hitherto untouched, drained it at a gulp.

"Why not wear a uniform, then, like our troops?" he said. "Then you all start even and so remain."

"Hassan, dear," she said patiently, "do you imagine we wear clothes *as* clothes?"

"That I concede," said her husband thoughtfully.

"When I get utterly sick of my old things and must have a new frock, it is because I simply must express my own individuality."

Hassan had a worried look.

"Let us get that straight," he said. "You call in Mustapha ibn Ali from the Paris Bazaar and pay him five thousand sequins and order him to express your own individuality?"

"Hassan," she said, "I have saved more than enough on cereals and newspapers this year to pay for my entire wardrobe."

The young Khan flushed and spoke out sharply. "You know that is not what I meant," he insisted. "You say you put on something in cerise to express yourself."

"Yes," said Ayesha, refusing to look in his direction.

"And immediately ten thousand other women put on cerise to express *themselves*?"

She nodded and picked up a magazine.

"And it's democracy?"

"That's what I said," she replied calmly.

"And it's assertion of one's individuality?" persisted the unhappy young man.

"It is," said Ayesha.

"But how can there be two utterly different things at the same time?" he pleaded.

"If I haven't made myself clear, I can't help it," said Ayesha, utterly absorbed in the interior decorating advertisements. At her side the Commander of the Faithful addressed a warning cough in the direction of the hapless

young Khan. But the latter leaned his aching forehead against the portières and said:

“That is reasoning like—”

“Please don’t say like a woman,” said Ayesha. “I have heard debates in the House of Elders.”

“If only I could understand,” moaned the young Khan.
“Do you, Father-in-law? ”

“Son-in-law,” said the Caliph gravely, “try some more coffee.”

STORY OF THE CALIPH AND THE BURNT CAKES

ON the first Thursday after the second Tuesday in the moon of Muharran the Commander of the Faithful with the Principal Censor took train from the capital for the new links thirty miles up the river in order to test out the short fourteenth, which for some months has been the talk of the town.

The skies were threatening when his Majesty departed and it was drizzling when they teed off, but the Caliph would not listen to reason. They were at the other end of the links from the clubhouse when the storm broke, and by the time they had presented themselves for shelter at the door of a herdsman's cottage, for which they ran with all speed, discarding their clubs on the way, the two were drenched to the skin.

In the hut they found a middle-aged woman of sharp aspect, who was baking millet cakes on the open hearth. To their request for permission to dry their clothes before the fire, she demurred at first. Then, softening somewhat to their pitiable state, she consented to give them hospitality on condition that they keep a careful eye on the millet cakes while she went outside to look after the cattle in the shed. When she returned after half an hour, the Caliph had almost succeeded in convincing the Principal Censor that par four on the long second hole was an outrageous imposi-

tion on the average player who does not go in for swatting the ball, and the cakes were burned to a coal.

"Now, may Allah deliver me from ever setting eyes again on so clumsy a pair of louts," cried the middle-aged woman. "Out with the two of you, I say." But as they meekly rose to depart, she slackened somewhat in her anger and commanded them to stay till the storm was over, seeing that the damage was done. "Only I wonder," she complained, "what sort of men you be and what is your occupation that you cannot be trusted with a panful of cakes on the ashes. I pity the Caliph, if with the help of such as you he must wage and win a war. But if my son, Selim, were here to help with the cattle I should not be compelled to leave my good bread in the care of footless strangers."

"And where is your son?" asked his Majesty.

"They have taken him, of course," she said, her lips trembling a little. "And who knows if I shall ever see him again?"

"Pray to Allah, mother, and Selim will come back to you."

She sat down on the floor and rocked to and fro, speaking rather to herself than to the strangers. "Pray to Allah?" she said bitterly. "But what of the men in Bagdad who have taken my son? What will they do with him?"

"They, too, are trying to give their best, mother," said the Caliph.

"Their best," she cried bitterly. "They are but men. And if they fail, if they fall asleep over the fire as you two have done, what will happen to my son?"

"Old woman," said the Principal Censor, "in speaking thus of his Majesty's Government, you violate Article XVI, Section 23, Paragraph 13—"

"Be quiet, P. C.," said the Caliph, and then to the middle-aged woman: "You speak truth, mother. I, too, have puzzled over this sad business of governing men, which is but a business in which mistakes are paid for in men's happiness and men's lives. But what is the way out of it?"

"Let the rulers fight their own battles," cried the old woman.

"In the early days we used to do that," said the Commander of the Faithful. "In those days the kings were heroes and a nation's fate might be left to the strength of their stout right arm. Would you have the fate of Mesopotamia now decided by the Caliph in single combat? I have heard—"

"I, too, have heard," said the woman with a sniff of contempt. "An elderly gentleman, soft with feeding and the harem. A noble warrior, to be sure. My Selim would make two bites of him."

"Woman," cried the Principal Censor, "by virtue of Postal Order Number 3456, you are—"

"Keep your tunic on, P. C.," said the Caliph, and to the middle-aged woman:

"So you see, mother. And how did Selim go?"

"He went gladly," she said, staring into the fire. "But that is how they always go, whether to war or to another woman; and we are left." And then, quite illogically, after the manner of women: "What cause for quarrel have I with the people of Madagascar? What right has the Caliph

to make war for me? Do you know what? There is some woman in Madagascar whose son has been taken from her, even as Selim. I will search her out, and make a separate peace with her for our two sons. Why not?"

"That idea has been anticipated, old woman," said the Principal Censor, "by an ancient infidel poet named Aristophanes, who represents a citizen of Athens, then at war with Sparta—"

"Don't be a pedant, P. C.," said the Caliph, and then to the middle-aged woman: "How will you seek out that woman of Madagascar to make peace with her? Will you leave your kine to look after themselves and travel across the seas?"

"What is the Government at Bagdad for?" she cried.

"So it's the people at Bagdad, again," said the Caliph gently. "They are not much, but they are the best way we know."

He fell silent.

"There was once a ruler of a great people who waged a long war, in which many, many young men perished. The war was not of his seeking. He was an infidel. His name was Lincoln. And in his heart there was never-ceasing pain for these men whom he sent to their death."

"For that, may Allah be kind to his unbelieving soul in the darkness," said the woman.

"And yet that is not a bad idea of yours, of fighting it out in single combat," said the Caliph, half to himself. "When this war is over, mother, we are going to take a step in that direction. We will agree with the other nations to cut down our armies by two-thirds. Instead of taking

ten young men from your village we shall take three. Some day, perhaps, we shall take only one. Who knows? There will come a time when no one will be taken from the crops and the cattle."

"That is all very well," she complained; "but who will pay me for the burnt cakes?"

STORY OF THE TWO WEARY TRAFFICKERS

NOW as the Caliph, accompanied by the faithful Messour and the present writer, was making his nightly round through the anti-alien zone along the river, his Majesty came near stumbling over the forms of two men seated in the dark on the steps of a cold-storage warehouse; of whom the one, with his head between his knees, moaned piteously in a hard, dry tone, while the other with the aid of an electric pocket torch bent over a heavy volume that lay open on his lap.

Addressing himself to the latter, "What book is this," said the Caliph, "that holds you thus spellbound, oh stranger, in such unacademic surroundings?"

The literary enthusiast looked at us with an eye in which intelligence and profound melancholy contended for mastery.

"Inquisitive Pedestrians," he said, "I am reading the Variorum Edition of the Dialogues of Plato in the original Greek; this in the strictest confidence."

"But why at this hour, and in this recondite place?" cried his Majesty.

The stranger made no attempt to conceal his astonishment.

"Because public opinion will not tolerate my reading anything else than the Glad Books," he said.

"And who are you, then?" demanded his Majesty.

"I am a Weary Trafficker," said the stranger; whereat the Commander of the Faithful, turning to the present writer, cried, "Now, this is a new one to me! What do you make of it, Sinbad?"

"Majesty," I replied, "it occurs to me that in my own country there is a class of men known as the Tired Business Men; it may be—"

"And who are these Tired Business Men?" queried the stranger eagerly.

"They are the people who are responsible for pretty nearly everything that is amiss with American literature and the drama," I said.

"That's me, all right," cried the stranger, letting the book fall to the ground and smiting his breast with both his hands. "As I said, the Weary Trafficker."

"And what makes you weary, unhappy stranger?" said the Caliph.

"Everybody," he replied. "The reviewers and the critics and the editorial writers; the organizers of the Mesopotamian Folk Drama and Dance League; the college professors who say that I stand in the way of a new Mesopotamian Art; and the Society for Safeguarding the Morals of Asia Minor. Whereas the fact is that I hate the crook drama and I prefer Plato to bed-room farce."

"Then why not say so?" growled Mesrour, who had picked up the Greek volume and was reading it backward.

"In the first place," said the Weary Trafficker, "no one would believe me, and if they caught me reading Plato they would send for the Bank Examiner to go over my accounts. In the second place, it would deprive all these

critics, professors, reviewers, editorial writers, and Drama League organizers of a principal source of income, and I shouldn't dream of doing that with food prices what they are."

"Then who *is* responsible for the crook drama?" said the Caliph.

"I am not certain," sobbed the stranger, "but I suspect it must be my wife."

"She is also Weary?" asked the Caliph.

"Alas, no," said the stranger. "Fatima is indefatigable. For when I come home at night and express my intention to put on carpet slippers and read Plato for the rest of the evening she insists that we go to the theater. But on our way home she turns to me and says, 'That is the kind of drama you men acclaim and support!' Always, oh stranger, it is the man who pays," and he rocked back and forth in his woe.

"It is hard," said the Caliph.

"Even so," replied the stranger. Then, brightening under our sympathy: "Yet am I not so unfortunate as this, my neighbor."

He put his arm tenderly around the shoulders of his companion, who had not budged from his semi-recumbent position, and lifted him so as to let our gaze fall upon his countenance, from which, alas, the light of reason had long since fled. The man stared at us, and from between his lips poured forth an idiot gabble which made even sturdy Mesrour turn away and feel in the folds of his turban for his handkerchief.

"This, too, is a Weary Trafficker?" I asked,

"More than weary," said the first stranger. "One of the leading members of our local Chamber of Commerce, his mind has collapsed utterly under the strain of war mathematics. Give ear."

I pulled forth my note book and we all leaned forward to catch the drift of that mumbled soliloquy. Subject to the interposition of the Censor, this is what we heard:

"If in the year 1916 I was a super-normal married man with two children under the age of eighteen collected at the source and reciprocally convertible into non-taxable Government securities—"

The Caliph turned a horrified, questioning face to the first stranger. The latter made a brave attempt to smile and failed.

"He is trying to figure out his income-tax under the new schedules," he said.

The unhappy mental wreck at his side looked up at the sound of the familiar word, laughed, nodded at us in a friendly manner that made the chills run down my back, and said:

"Subtracting 2 per cent. of all sums above 20,000 sequins from the date of the battle of Waterloo, and adding all accrued debts, personal and realty, to the extra thirteen days of the Russian calendar for the years 1916 and 1917, in parallel columns, the result in red ink for all aged and infirm dependents—"

"This is awful," said the Caliph. "Is there no hope at all?"

"We have tried pretty nearly everything," said the first stranger. "At my instance he has repeatedly tried to give

away his entire fortune above 2,000 sequins—for he is a married man; but you know what friends are in the hour of need. Men who have always been ready to borrow from him on the slightest provocation have thrown his deed of gift back in his face or else pleaded duty to their family.”

“Then all is lost?” I asked.

The other nodded. “The malady is progressive. It is not only the income tax now. Listen.”

We bent forward and I wrote down, verbatim:

“If 7 1-3 cents be added to a 60 per cent. increase in the cost of feed within a 200-mile pasteurized radius for Certified Grade B—”

“The milk rates,” said the first stranger. “He has been reading the dairy advertisements.”

“Now, by the beard of the Commissioner of Water, Gas and Electricity,” cried Mesrour, “it were best to put this sad wretch out of his misery at once,” and he drew his sword.

But the first stranger cried out:

“In the name of Allah, desist. He has a young daughter about to be married happily. Would you compel her to figure out the special inheritance tax?”

STORY OF SCHEHERAZADE'S SISTERS

TIME hung heavy on the Princess Ayesha's hands. Her husband, the young Hassan Khan, was engaged in daily consultations with the Ministry of High and Low Finance concerning the hundred million sequin loan, non-repayable and at six per cent. deferred interest. His Majesty, her father, was absorbed in problems of naval strategy. These, he said, might best be studied from a hill in close proximity to the golf links. The women of Bagdad were busy with their hospital work and, consequently, a truce had been called in the sex war. Under these circumstances, the Princess Ayesha was pleased to summon me quite frequently into her presence and to while away the time by questioning me in regard to the life and civilization of my native land.

I found her on one occasion in the company of the Principal Censor, who had been detailing to her the progress of the war on land. As he omitted the date and place of every engagement together with the number of forces on either side and who won, Ayesha was in the habit of saying that she found the Principal Censor delightfully restful.

Even as I entered, he rose to take his departure.

"Must you go, Hajji Ali?" said Ayesha, yawning slightly.

"Your Imminence," said the Principal Censor, glancing at his wrist watch, "it is late. If you will divide the mean

annual rainfall in Mesopotamia by the average number of children among the upper middle class families of Bagdad you will have a very fair idea of what time it is."

He crawled out of the room backward and in a zig-zag fashion; the former out of deference to his royal mistress and the latter for the sake of withholding all information of his movements from the enemy.

The Princess was exceptionally gracious that afternoon and bade me rise after my second full-length prostration, which I understand is a low record for journalists in Bagdad.

"Tell me about the position of women in your own country, Sinbad," said the Princess quite suddenly. That was Ayesha's way.

"Scintillating One," I said, "I am a plain newspaper man. I have chronicled marriages and separations, sacrifices and scandals, tragedies and farces, millionaires' wives and shirtwaist workers, grandmothers and flappers; but what do I know about women?"

Ayesha was visibly disappointed.

"I was so anxious to know how the status of women in Turkestan and Bagdad compared with your own," she said.

"Select One," I said, "I did not listen well. Concerning women I know nothing. Concerning the Position of Woman I can speak with authority. Deign but to ask."

"How do you treat your women, Sinbad?" she said.

"With the utmost deference and consideration," I said. "We always remove our hats when addressing a lady. We invariably rise to our feet when a woman enters the room.

The man who will hesitate to give up his seat to a woman in a public conveyance is a rare exception. Above all, it is quite unheard of that any statement uttered by a woman should be challenged by one of the opposite sex on any ground."

"Do you think that is being kind to them?" said Ayesha with a touch of asperity.

"Your Highness," I said, "it is innate respect. When a woman in my country confuses Kamchatka with Capetown we bow to her superior intuition."

"Do they frequently make such mistakes?" said Ayesha.

"Not at all, your Highness," I said. "It is a fact that the intellectual life of our country outside of the colleges is almost entirely carried on by our women. We of the other sex content ourselves with a simple stipulation. We insist that the standards of culture maintained by our wives and daughters shall be higher than we, the men, can ever hope to attain. This is popularly known as the Double Standard. Custom requires that the best in art, literature and music shall be reserved for the women. The men try to get along with what is merely amusing."

"Always?" said Ayesha, frowning.

"Not always, Incontestable One," I said. "Men will sometimes be discovered reading a fine novel or attending a play of superior merit. The reason is probably that it is the kind of book or play that every woman ought to make her husband read or see. Sometimes men will go to the play on their own initiative and by themselves. They do this in order to find out whether the play is a safe one for them to take their fiancées to."

"I call that hateful," said Ayesha.

"You have spoken, Highness," I said. "Nevertheless the custom is not so cruel as would appear at first sight. For if the man should report that the play in question is not quite the thing, they go to see it anyhow."

"So it gets down to this," said Ayesha. "You men do very little for the promotion of culture in America."

"Incredible One," I said, "just a moment. We do our share. You may put it this way. The principal contribution of my sex to the higher life among us is in the rôle of escort. Custom is sharply opposed to any woman being seen on the streets or in any public conveyance after night-fall without a male companion. That is why the theater, which functions chiefly at night, is the one form of art in which men and women participate on something like an equal numerical basis. But it is different with music which is largely an afternoon art. The same is true of picture galleries. It is emphatically the case with literature, which obviously can be pursued at home and without an escort. Here the field is virtually preëmpted by women readers."

At this point the young Hassan Khan entered. He greeted me after his usual kindly fashion, though, as he told us, he had had a hard morning of it with the Minister of High and Low Finance. The Minister of Finance insisted that the hundred million sequin loan should be non-repayable in forty-two years and the young Khan held out for twenty-one years. They finally agreed that no payments on the loan should be made for thirty years, after which it would automatically lapse.

Ayesha thereupon asked me if I had ever noticed the ex-

ceptionally fine arabesques on the wall behind me. And when I had sufficiently admired the wondrous art of the unknown master craftsman, Ayesha and Hassan were sitting close together on the couch and they were holding hands.

"Sinbad has been telling me about the women in his country," said Ayesha. "That is where you should have gone, Hassan, for a really intelligent wife."

"I prefer them the other way," said Hassan, who, for a monarch, was not devoid of humor.

For a moment Ayesha looked at Hassan as if she were about to call my attention to some exquisite specimens of stained glass just behind me. But she changed her mind and recalled that shortly before the war she had met a delightful little American woman, a school-teacher from Kansas. Ayesha asked if we had many women teachers in the West.

"Highness," I said, "in the absence of the Principal Censor there may be no harm in mentioning that we have nearly half a million of them."

"But why women?" said Hassan.

"Pride of the Oxus," I replied, "education may have one of two objects. It may be, in the first place, a preparation for business. That is why we entrust the care of our children to young women who are thoroughly unacquainted with the spirit and processes of modern industry and commerce. Or else the purpose of education is to prepare one not for making a living but for life, as Confucius remarked in the year 576 B. C. Now the best way to prepare a child for life is to hand it over to a woman of good character who

has graduated from Normal School at the age of eighteen and who, after thirty years of service, has attained an average annual salary of six hundred and fifty dollars, provided she has not minimized her knowledge of life by getting married."

"The pay strikes me as somewhat meager," said Hassan.

"Excellency," I said, "the deep seated reverence for women which is one of the dominant traits of our people finds striking expression in the underpayment of women teachers. In general it is recognized that the higher moral status which woman occupies among us, entitles her to less pay for an equal amount of work. We believe concerning women in all gainful occupations that the more they are paid the more they spend on crepe shirtwaists and silk stockings. That is why millions of women in my country are rigorously safeguarded against the temptations which accrue with an adequate salary."

Hassan was undeniably about to express his agreement with that point of view, but he caught the frown on Ayesha's face, coughed, cleared his throat, and said, "I call it disgusting."

The smile Ayesha gave him was like the first ray of the morning sun over the pinnacles of the Koko-Nor.

"It's more than disgusting," said Hassan. "It's a blanked outrage."

"Descendant of the Major Prophets," I said, "you have spoken. The privileged position occupied by the women of my country is even now being seriously menaced. Oddly enough, the danger comes from the women themselves. For a good many years they have been trying hard to descend

from their lofty position to a common level with their men. The case has been summed up by one of our most celebrated professors of Contemporary Civilization who now holds a high place on the Shipping Board. He points out that social agitation during the last twenty-five years in my country is in large measure the result of a determined effort on the part of our women to climb down from their pedestal and of an equally determined counter-effort by a large section of the male population to shoo them back. Already our women have been degraded to complete political equality with their men. Equal pay agitation threatens to reduce them to economic equality. Beyond that lie vast and menacing possibilities, such as the cigarette habit. As your great leader, Hammurabi, remarked in the year 3452 B. C., it is a situation to make the judicious grieve."

"Sticks!" said Ayesha, with a contempt that Hassan evidently thought became her admirably, for he asked me if that was not some one scratching for admittance at the cloth-of-gold curtain behind me. I looked, but there was no one there.

STORY OF SCHEHERAZADE'S SISTERS (Continued)

THE reader may have noticed that I told the Princess Ayesha naught concerning the political status of the women in my own country. The reason was that in respect to politics there is no difference between Mesopotamia and the United States. This will appear from the few remarks here appended.

The women of Mesopotamia as a class are still in very much the same condition prescribed for them by the holy Koran and the Philadelphia *Inquirer*. That is to say, woman occupies the position of inferiority imposed upon her by the laws of nature until such a time as she learns stenography and typewriting and alters the laws of nature.

The activities and preoccupations of the women of this country are confined to the bearing and nursing of children, cultivating the millet fields, feeding the camels, building houses, hauling canal-boats, trafficking in the bazaars, pleading in the courts, prescribing for the sick, writing for the screen drama, working in the munition mills, canvassing for de luxe editions, climbing mountains, extracting teeth, organizing clubs and running for office in them, drilling for home defense with spear and buckler, piloting ferry-boats, selling stock in Ararat Copper, and the like. There is little doubt that in a few years there will not be a single trade or profession in which the women of Mesopotamia will not be inferior to the men.

There are, to be sure, some over-bold females in Bagdad, most of them young and fluent orators, who have chosen

to speak of these things as a sign of woman's progress. The obvious reply to this was made by the editor of the Bagdad *Barnacle*. He pointed out that the very fact of her making progress argued woman's inferiority. There is no moving forward unless you are behind. And he contrasted the restlessness and so called "progress" of the women of Mesopotamia with the inclination among the other sex to stand pat, as the Koran puts it, or even to go back perceptibly.

Nevertheless it happened that the women of Mesopotamia, obsessed with the idea that they were progressing, began to demand a voice in the various councils and congregations that make the laws. As soon as these laws are enacted the Supreme Tribunals usually annul them. When the Cadis declare a law void, there is a great deal of indignation among the populace. But when the Cadis approve a law, the populace gives no more attention to it except when the time comes to repeal it. That is beside the point, however. The women of this country persisting in their clamor for a share in the making of the laws, the Bagdad *Barnacle* bethought itself of the fact that women are ill-adapted for political life because they are essentially creatures of emotion, whereas men are at all times swayed by reason. To show how reason operates in the average Mesopotamian male the *Barnacle* cited the following instances:

Exhibit A. Abdullah Khan, grocer, who had it direct from Ibrahim Pasha, who had it direct from Mustapha ben Omar, that 200 submarines of the empire of Madagascar were captured on the first day of war and are now kept hidden in the harbor of Basra.

Exhibit B. Yussuf ben Nozeyr, broker, who maintains

that the Emperor of Madagascar can invade us with 1,000,000 men in fifty ships, but that to invade Madagascar with 100,000 men we need five hundred ships.

Exhibit C. Hassan ben Ali, mercerized silks, who insists that when we capture the enemy trenches we do so with trifling loss, but that when the enemy captures our trenches it is out of fear and despair and accompanied by enormous casualties and acute demoralization.

Nevertheless the controversy raged, to the disturbance of the public peace and the great hurt of business, until it was decided to submit the quarrel to the venerable Cadi Suleiman ibn Daoud.

And he made the following test: He ordered before him the householder Zobeyr and his wife Fatima, and, addressing himself to the man, he said, "Son, why should not Fatima vote?"

"Because she is not my equal," said Zobeyr.

"Very well," said Suleiman. "Shut your eyes tight, the two of you."

They did so.

"Now open your eyes."

They did so.

"Now look at the young woman in the booth across the street while I count four. Now close your eyes."

They did so.

"Now tell me, son, what manner of young woman was that in the booth across the street."

"She wore a blue robe, or perhaps it was green," said Zobeyr.

"Was she tall or short?" asked Suleiman.

"I cannot tell," said Zobeyr.

"Was she dark or fair?"

"I do not recall," said Zobeyr.

Suleiman turned to Fatima. "Speak, daughter."

"That girl in the booth," said Fatima, "is no better than she should be. Her hair is bleached. The hem of her robe on the left side is frayed. The latchet of her left sandal is loose. Her nails are ill-kept and she has an unpleasant cast in the right eye."

"Son," said Suleiman to Zobeyr, "manifestly your wife is not your inferior in the power of observation."

"That is an elementary sort of gift," grumbled Zobeyr.

"Be it so," said Suleiman. "Tell me, son, when will the war with Madagascar be brought to a close?"

"In six months," said Zobeyr.

"How do you know?"

"I saw it in the *Barnacle*," said Zobeyr.

"Daughter," said Suleiman, "when will the war end?"

"In two months, oh Cadi," said Fatima; "I feel it in my bones."

"Son," said Suleiman, "your wife is not your inferior in judgment."

"That is nothing," said Zobeyr. "There is really one mental quality that counts, the creative imagination, in which women are notably deficient."

"Be it so," said Suleiman, and turned to Fatima. "Daughter, what do you see in this poor figure of a man, your husband?"

She flashed back in white wrath: "Cadi, my husband is the comeliest man you will find in a day's journey and better to me than I deserve!"

Suleiman cast one swift glance of appraisal at Zobeyr.

"Daughter," he said, "you are not wanting in imagination. Go out and vote."

STORY OF THE CALIPH AND THE MODIFIED GARY SYSTEM

HIS Majesty's extraordinary reversal of form on the links—he took 109 for the eighteen holes at the Asurbanipal Country Club last Monday—is not to be attributed to worry over the progress of the war, as the common explanation goes, but to a far different matter, namely, the proposed reorganization of the school system. I have it on his Majesty's own authority that he lies awake nights pondering the relative merits of the play-study-work system, which is at present in force in the schools, and the work-play-study system, which has been brought forward as a substitute. "There is a vital difference there, of course, Sinbad," said the Caliph, "but at times it gets away from me."

He told me that the question was brought up the other day by the Minister of Circulating Decimals, who is the head of the national system of education in Mesopotamia and who presented a petition humbly requesting that the title of his office be changed to Minister of Spontaneous Scroll Work and Plumbing. The petition was discussed in an extraordinary council consisting of his Majesty, the Minister of Circulating Decimals, the Chief Mullah, and the Principal Censor, of whom the last was present to pass judgment on the relation of the suggested changes in the curriculum to the efficient conduct of the war.

"Luminence," said the Minister of Circulating Decimals, "our present system is antiquated. The study of decimals, inherited from the medieval schoolmen, has no bearing on the problems of democracy. Whereas Scroll Work and Plumbing go to the heart of modern life; they are the education of the future. I leave it to the Venerable Chief Mullah if that is not so."

The Chief Mullah smiled benignly and nodded. The Chief Mullah weighs 270 in his stockings and radiates optimism. People take one look at him and go out and buy 100,000 sequins' worth of Mesopotamian Emancipation Bonds.

"Son," he said, addressing the Minister of Circulating Decimals, "it is indeed the system of the future; everything is. It is also the system of the past; everything is. Circulating Decimals was the system of the future 1,200 years ago, 800 years ago, and 400 years ago. Scroll Work and Plumbing were the system of the future a thousand years ago, 600 years ago, and 200 years ago. That is the wonder and beauty of the child soul; it will bear up under anything."

"There is one thing," said the Caliph. "In formulating your school program, shouldn't there be some consideration for the welfare of the parents? Now, I was brought up under the old system. I studied the classics and learned to do my forty lines of the Mahabharata in an hour and a half with the aid of a dromedary"—this is the Mesopotamian school slang for a literal translation. "I memorized a number of names and dates. I could bound Kashmere and Nova Zembla. Very well. But to-day my little Yussuf

comes home from his experimental Modern School and says, 'Dad, how do you make an aeroplane?' I don't know how to make an aeroplane. I don't know how to light a fire when I am lost in the desert without matches. I can't tell north and south by the leaves of the palm tree. I don't know which way the seeds point in a pomegranate. I don't know how to build a phonograph; all of which things my Yussuf asks me, to my own great discomfiture and an undeniable loss in my prestige as a father."

"Your indulgence, Majesty," said the Minister of Circulating Decimals, "but you will not deny that aeroplanes are more in touch with the problems of modern life than a Sanskrit author whom you could at no time read with ease and whose language is now utterly strange to you?"

"The question is not quite that, Abu Hassan," said the Caliph thoughtfully. "As a matter of fact my Yussuf doesn't know how to build a successful aeroplane without the aid of his professor of Scroll Work and Ballistics. So it seems to me that building an aeroplane which doesn't fly is not utterly different from reading a classic author whom you cannot translate. Yet I was happy in my time and Yussuf is a very happy child; for the reason that neither of us has been educated to anything useful. What say you, Venerable Father?"

The Chief Mullah embraced the meeting with a smile. "Majesty," he said, "a camel driver became the founder of our faith, and pale students from the theological schools have conquered the world with the sword. Education will never keep a man down."

"Glorious Integrity," said the Minister of Circulating

Decimals, "when you would prepare a child for life you must—"

"But that is just it," said the Commander of the Faithful. "I cannot help thinking that the purpose of elementary education is not to prepare a child for life, but to teach him how to read the newspapers. You disagree, P. C.?"

"I merely wished to remark, Munificence," said the Principal Censor, "that such preparation is no longer necessary. A proper supervision of the press reduces the art of newspaper reading to its very simplest terms."

"That may be so," said the Caliph, "or again the contrary may be true; and the more censors, the greater need for intelligence on the part of the newspaper public. But what I meant to say was this, Abu Hassan. The great need in a democracy is a public that can read the newspapers and so keep an eye on its rulers. You won't deny that this is really going to be the great problem of the future. Our forefathers had this in mind when they established our free public schools. They did not set out to prepare men for life, but to enable them to discuss politics around the warming-pan in the bazaar, and so preserve our liberties."

"Majesty," said the Minister of Circulating Decimals, with a touch of asperity, "they do not learn to read very well in the schools."

"So much the better, I am tempted to say," replied the Caliph. "That only makes them more discontented and ready to pass judgment. Take one striking case. Take our enemies, the people of Madagascar. They are ahead of every other nation in the kind of education which teaches by doing. They have schools, and continuation schools,

and post-graduate schools in scroll work and plumbing and aeroplane construction and aniline dyes. And what is the result? They are the most enslaved nation of all and we are now engaged in saving democracy from their hands. If the people of Madagascar were not so well trained for life in their schools, the world would be ever so much better off."

"Your Majesty has been reading Bernard Shaw," cried the Minister of Circulating Decimals, bitterly.

The Principal Censor looked up.

"That is a devil of a fellow, Shaw," he said. "I can do nothing with him. I cut out every other word and it makes just as good sense. I turn him backward and it doesn't make the slightest difference."

But the Caliph commanded silence.

"Take, on the other hand, the case of our good allies, the people of Russia, who have recently sent their monarch about his business. Now who was it that brought about the Russian Revolution? Was it the peasants who are always in touch with the education which comes from life; who know birds and flowers and why the wind blows and which way the seeds lie in an apple and can mend a wagon wheel and build an oven and repair a plow and play on the concertina? No, Abu Hassan. It is the workers of the towns who have forgotten all these things, who have learned to read just enough to make them restless—it is they who have shaken the world."

"Your Majesty argues for an ill-adjusted educational system?" said the Minister of Circulating Decimals.

"As a believer in democracy, I do," said the Caliph.

STORY OF THE DISCOURAGED ORACLE

AS the Commander of the Faithful, escorted by the Principal Censor and the present writer, was turning his face homewards, after a tour of the storage warehouse and wharfage district, he stopped short and pointed an anxious finger towards the river front.

"Is that a man, Sinbad," he said, "leaning there over the string-piece and gazing meditatively into the waters of the Tigris? "

"It is, Majesty," I said; and peering through the dark I was relieved to find that it was indeed as I had spoken.

"There is profound discouragement in the bend of his shoulders," said the Caliph. "We must save him from himself," and stealing forward, he laid a kindly hand on the watcher's arm.

"Son," said his Majesty, "what ails you? "

The watcher turned a lack-luster eye on our little group.

"Everything, Stranger," he replied.

"You find the world an ill place? " said the Commander of the Faithful.

"I should hate to be quoted to that effect," replied the other.

"Ah, then, the world is good to live in, even at this hour of midnight? " persisted his Majesty.

"Search me," said the other, with mingled indifference

and despair, and turned back to his contemplation of the yellow waters of the Tigris.

His Majesty massaged his beard with those rapid downward strokes which I knew for the familiar sign of irritation.

"What bothers you, then?" he rapped out, like the clean-cut masterful hero of one of our own magazine fiction stories.

The midnight watcher turned upon us fiercely.

"You want to know what I think of this world of yours? Well, I'll tell you. It's too darned big a world, that's what the matter is. And there are too many people in it. It gives me a headache."

"Sire," whispered the Principal Censor, pulling out his note book, "this touches on sedition." But his Majesty motioned to him to hold his peace and addressed himself to the stranger in a voice that was unmistakably vibrant with sympathy.

"Son," he said, "I frequently experience the same symptoms. But I have never stopped to ascertain the cause. Who are you?"

The stranger turned and faced us with folded arms. His aspect was still downcast, but he was obviously softening to his Majesty's show of interest.

"I am, oh Nocturnal Inquirers," he said, "a Student of Contemporaneous Tendencies. With this I also combine the functions of an Accomplished Conversationalist. In both capacities it was my habit to sum up in a few felicitous words everything that happened to come up over the dessert—the world, life, art, sex, and the future of democracy. Without boasting, I may say that I was more than

moderately successful in my field. Especially in prognosticating the progress of world politics my batting average was high. But now, take this ridiculous war—”

“That’s my headache, all right,” cried the Commander of the Faithful.

“And how should it be otherwise?” demanded the stranger, bitterly. “I simply cannot get the geography of six continents into my head simultaneously, and that’s all there is to it; and what is more, I suspect the commanders-in-chief can’t either. While I am putting the finishing touches to the relief map of lower Mesopotamia some one goes and breaks through my impregnable positions in Flanders, after I had demonstrated that those positions simply couldn’t be touched. And while I am busy exhausting the Kaiser’s last reserves on the Balkan front, he springs 500,000 men upon me in the upper valleys of the Hindu Kush.”

“We’ll win that war yet,” cried the Principal Censor, and then, aware of his professional indiscretion, “somewhere and some time.”

“And what about the young generation?” cried the stranger.

“It will doubtless grow up,” remarked the Principal Censor, sententiously.

“To be sure it will, but how?” insisted the stranger. “Once upon a time when the world was smaller, you could say that the young generation was a distinct improvement; or you could say that it was going to the dogs. But now there are two million young people in Bagdad; of whom some go in for breaking school windows and some sit at home and knit for the soldiers and do without candy and

new shoes. And if there is anything worse than the young generation it's the drama."

"What about our contemporary drama?" said the Caliph, as he sat on a coil of rope and pitched stones into the Tigris.

"How's one to know?" replied the other dismally. "Once upon a time we had four playhouses in Bagdad, and if it wasn't a degrading and ominous crook-play season, it was a season rich with promise for the building up of a national Mesopotamian drama. But nowadays if a building isn't a garage it's a theater; and when you have enumerated thirty-seven cheap melodramas, somebody mentions six first-class plays. So that in the end you don't know whether the drama in Bagdad is going to the devil or is developing into a force for national uplift."

"But on the whole," I ventured to say, "we are going ahead. Now that two million women have the vote in the province of Bagdad, the general level of culture—"

The stranger threw up his hands in horror.

"Women!" he cried. "This person speaks of women! The only subject upon which it was still possible to pass a bit of an epigram without being asked for evidence! But now, when you say that Woman is this or Woman is that, some one flags you with a napkin and wants to know whether you mean this kind of woman or the other kind. The world was getting too big for me with all the men in it. Now they have let in the ladies."

He buried his face in his hands and wept silently.

"You disapprove of the outcome of the late suffrage referendum?" asked the Caliph softly.

The stranger replied in heartbroken accents,

"I lost twenty-one sequins on that election. And how should it be otherwise? The voting mass is getting too big. How can you tell what it's going to do? When it's 650,000 votes against 550,000 votes they call it a smashing majority. But if one voter in twelve went the other way the smashing majority would go the other way. How can you tell what that one man will do? He might get up on Election Day with a slight indigestion. He might be dissatisfied with the way the war is going in Kamchatka. Why, you can always find one plain fool in every twelve people you meet. And now it's going to be worse than ever."

"I should think a nice deserted island—" I suggested.

"I've just come back from one," the stranger sobbed. "I was brought up near one. We used to camp out there and go in swimming without bathing suits. Now Abdul Fez, of the Nineveh First National, has bought it and there are three golf links and seven thousand bungalows, Allah be merciful."

But the Caliph, who had been thoughtfully biting at the nail of his thumb, here looked up and said, "Son, be comforted. There is another side. This world may be so full of men and things that you can't sweep them all into one flashing epigram. But on the other hand, with so many people and things about, you can always be in the right, whatever you say. Formerly you hit it or you missed it. Now you are bound to hit something."

"But it makes poor conversation," protested the stranger.

"Not for the other fellow," said the Caliph.

STORY OF THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS AND THE NEWER IMMIGRATION

LIKE all other well-informed people here in Bagdad, I believed that the Commander of the Faithful was looking forward with satisfaction to the end of the first war session of the National Council. The Council, you will recall, is the legislative assembly of Mesopotamia. The name goes back to the very earliest times, being found in the cuneiform inscriptions, though there is a difference of opinion among scholars as to the correct reading, some transcribing it "Council," and others, "Belzaz."

You will also recall that the Council comprises two Chambers, one of 96 members, known as the House of Elders, and one of 435 members, known as The Younger Set. There used to be a difference in the mode of election, the Elders being usually elected with suspicion and the Younger Set with indifference; but all distinctions have now been eliminated.

Since the declaration of war against Madagascar the Council had been in continuous session. It now stands adjourned after enacting a mass of useful war legislation and providing for the expenditure of sums ranging from eleven billion sequins to one hundred and forty-seven billion sequins, according to the color of the ink employed for the headlines.

Like all popular assemblies, the National Council of Mesopotamia has been something of a trial to the Executive head of the Government, because of its peculiar habit of legislation. The Council makes laws by inserting things into bills which it later throws out, the usual apportionment of time being, say, one afternoon for inserting something and two weeks for throwing it out. This is naturally harassing to a Chief Executive in war time, especially if he has already been putting the law into effect and is only waiting for it to be enacted. For that reason it has been the common impression that between the Commander of the Faithful and the National Council there was no love lost.

Imagine my surprise, therefore, when, in answer to my request for a brief statement on the achievements of the legislative session, the Caliph looked out of the window thoughtfully and remarked: "It's been a very good Council, Sinbad. I see them go—"

"Not with regret, your Majesty?" I ejaculated.

"Well, say, with a mingled feeling of relief and sympathy," he replied. And then very soberly, "We are an extremely irreverent folk, we Mesopotamians, and much given to light-minded jesting at things that are, after all, very close to our hearts, or ought to be. It has become a habit to speak of the Council, and especially of the Younger Set, as by turns or simultaneously stupid, unpatriotic, parochial-minded, and misrepresentative. We say that instead of keeping both eyes on his duty the average Youngersetter keeps one eye on his salary and the other on his constituency. We say that he usually dare not call his soul his own, but is always thinking of the next election. Now, I

leave it to you, Sinbad, if that isn't after all what the Younger Set is for—to be afraid of their constituencies. It may not be the highest statesmanship, but it is representation.”

“But the national will, your Majesty, especially in time of crisis,” I said.

“What is the national will, Sinbad, but the product of a great fermentation of different wills? A favorite phrase describing a member of the Council is, in the popular language of the country, *shatt-el-ahab*, which means ‘Young-man-with-his-ear-to-the-ground.’ It is not a dignified position, Sinbad, but after all, it is a way of getting at public sentiment. When they get up from the ground and start comparing notes, something is bound to emerge. By an adjustment of 435 parochialisms we get something like a general sentiment; and I am there to trim the edges when needful.”

“Inexpugnable One,” I said, “in times of crisis it is your Majesty alone that can see and think for the nation as a whole.”

“To some extent, perhaps,” he conceded, “but in all sincerity it would be a much harder task for me to see singly for the whole country if I had not the 435 isolated views to guide me, correct me, warn me, and, on occasion, irritate me, perhaps. In the last emergency, I intervene.”

“And do they always listen to reason, Bright One?” I said.

“Sometimes they listen to reason. Sometimes I read them a passage from the Koran in emphatic tones; that is part of the *métier*, as our great poet Sadi has said.”

He ran his fingers through his beard, deeply engrossed in his thought; then:

"And there is another point which people almost invariably overlook in speaking of the Council and its narrow outlook; and that is the question of the Melting-Pot."

I looked conventionally astonished.

"You see, Sinbad," he went on, "we are a people of many strains and races. Upon the aboriginal population of Accadians and Sumerians, the ages have deposited successive strata of invasion—Iranian highlanders, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Arabs, Turks, down to the latest immigrants from Scythia, who have built up the needle industry in Bagdad, and the Mediterraneans, who have dug most of our canals and water works. Now it is the natural desire of thinking men that all these elements might emerge from what we call the Melting-Pot as a single Mesopotamian national product."

"Majesty," I said, "I am a journalist rather than a thinking man, but the idea appeals irresistibly."

"Quite so," he said. "But people are sometimes unreasonable, Sinbad. They expect all these strains to mingle, wed, and blend, in the turn of a hand, so to speak. Whereas you can see for yourself that many years must pass before that physical amalgamation is completed. It is not in reason to expect that the latest arrival from Baluchistan, who is now engaged in repaving the streets of Bagdad, should take for his wife a daughter of our oldest Chaldean families. His son may, but even from him we must not expect too much. It is a matter of generations."

"But people are impatient, Luminence," I said.

"Exactly," he said. "And that is where our National Council comes in. Long before the immigrants from Baluchistan have mingled their blood with the rest of the nation they will have elected a Baluchistanian representative to the Younger Set of the Council. Perhaps he may at times think more as a Baluchistanian than as a Mesopotamian, but in that case he will be counterchecked by the representatives from the Chaldean, Accadian, Sumerian Arab, and Turkish districts. In other words, until we get our perfected Mesopotamian type I like to think of the National Council as embodying the Melting-Pot in its most advanced stage of fusion."

Since it is not customary to applaud or to make comment on a sermon, I remained silent.

"Yes," he went on half to himself. "I like the Younger Set. They have their weaknesses and extravagances, but what then? They have a passion for post offices and rivers and harbors; and there is parasangage?"

"Parasangage?" I stammered.

"The law," he said, "which allows every member of the Council two silver sequins for every parasang he travels to and from the capital. As a result some of them have developed the habit of traveling from Basra to Bagdad by way of the Panama Canal. That's a minor matter, perhaps; only they have carried the practice of parasangage into their debates. That is why a member of the Council can seldom speak less than forty-eight hours. But who of us is perfect in the eyes of Allah?"

STORY OF THE CALIPH AND THE COSMIC URGE

WHEN the returns from 2,546 kazas out of 3,324 in the sanjak of Bagdad made it certain that suffrage had carried, and that women at last were to enjoy the privileges which had been theirs about the year 2200 B. C., his Majesty uttered a great sigh of relief, rose from his divan, smoothed his beard, and invited me to accompany him to the apartments occupied by his daughter Ayesha and her husband the young Khan of Turkestan. We found Ayesha reclining on a couch—she had but recently returned from campaign headquarters in the Babel Tarik—and the young Khan at her feet reading to her out of a new volume of translations from Tchekhoff. A less intelligent woman than Ayesha would have discerned from the Caliph's bearing the purport of his visit.

"Papa, this is dear of you," she cried as she ran forward to meet him.

"Daughter and fellow-voter," said his Majesty affectionately, "my heartiest congratulations. And to both you, Hassan and Ayesha, my sincere hope that you will renew the acquaintance interrupted by my daughter's enforced absences from home in a public cause."

I detected a shade of embarrassment and pain in the young Khan's face as he bent to kiss the hand of his Imperial father-in-law. But Ayesha spoke up gaily:

"We are running off for the week-end to Basra," she said; "and then back to work."

The Commander of the Faithful looked worried.

"But what other work is there for your hands, oh daughter?" he said.

"It's very simple," she replied. "Now that we have the vote, we start right in on our campaign for the regulation of the wine traffic in all cities of the first and second class. It will be a bully fight." And as the Caliph drew back in surprise: "You disapprove, papa?"

His Majesty sat down on the couch and stared hopelessly before him.

"Daughter," he said at length, "I confess that I had been looking forward to a rest."

"But surely you would not have the world stand still?" cried Ayesha.

"Not even for a year or two?" said the Commander of the Faithful, pitifully. "If you only knew what this continuous agitation is doing to my game, Ayesha! I have developed an abominable slice. I was hoping that perhaps, for a little while, there would be nothing in the papers about protests and delegations. I don't think I could stand many more delegations, daughter. They play havoc with my blood pressure. And where is it all to stop? When you have regulated the wine traffic you will start a movement for university reform, and after that it will be rotation of crops, I suppose, and after that—" he waved his hands hopelessly.

Ayesha regarded him severely.

"I'm afraid you're getting old, papa," she said.

"Perhaps I am," he said. "Well, haven't we old people some rights? Only, I beseech you, Ayesha," he cried out in quick alarm, "please, please don't go and start a movement for the Protection of Sexagenarians. I really couldn't stand that. I'd much rather suffer in silence than be honorary chairman at an Old People's mass-meeting."

"Father," she cried, neglectful of her husband's silent admonitions, "that's what all the stick-in-the-muds have been saying since the world began."

"It must be a comfort to stick in the mud for a little while," murmured the Caliph.

"I'd expect such opinions from the stodgy old anti-everythings," went on the impetuous daughter of the Caliphs, "but from you, the successor of kings and prophets? It's heartbreaking."

"Ayesha," pleaded the young Khan, biting his nails.

"Daughter," said the Caliph, "I may be a King and a Caliph, but I am also a human being and a golfer. As such, I deserve some consideration. And mind you, what is it I ask? An end to all progress? Not at all. Merely an armistice. Why couldn't we have five years of progress followed by, say, three years of comfort? A sort of Jubilee period, like the one which that sagacious legislator, Musa, ordained for the Israelites. It was to be a period of rest in which every man sat under his own fig tree instead of trying to spray fungicide all over his neighbor's fig trees. I believe I have my facts right, Sinbad? "

"It is even as you say, Effulgency," I remarked, making a mental note to look up Israelites in the encyclopedia as soon as I got home.

"For that matter," continued the Caliph, obviously pleased with his own happy thought, "it would be a good thing for everybody concerned. See with what fresh energy you could return to the attack, Ayesha, after a three years' holiday. That would be a sufficiently long truce. In three years I could get my score-card down to a point where even the Government ownership of railways wouldn't shake it."

"So it amounts to this, father," said Ayesha, "that you would have the forces of righteousness and progress mark time and not interfere with the afternoon nap of a stupid, selfish, overfed world."

The young Khan, her husband, walked to the window and played Abu el Nozeyr's Spring Song on the pane with nervous fingers, but the Caliph stroked his beard and looked down on the costly rug at his feet, copied from a design by Leon Bakst.

"Now, that is just the doubt which has sometimes come to me, daughter," he said. "Is it always a quarrel between people who give up the pleasures of life to fight for righteousness, and people who will not sacrifice their comfort to duty? Sometimes I think that the people who are always agitating get as much fun out of it as those of us who like to sit still now and then. So that it isn't really sacrifice and martyrdom. Thus your good friend, Fatima, wife of my Under-Secretary for Sedition, El Hassim—"

"What is wrong with Fatima?" challenged the princess.

"Oh, nothing, absolutely nothing," the Caliph cried hastily. "An excellent woman and as brave as a lion. But when I asked El Hassim the other day why his wife is so

frequently out on hunger strikes, he replied, 'Serenity, she enjoys it.' And even when she is not fasting she asks questions. She said to me the other day, at the reception to the Ambassador from Tegucigalpa, 'Majesty,' she said, 'do you not think that the young generation is splendidly grappling for a securer spiritual anchorage?' Now, I leave it to you, what sort of question is that to one who has just returned from a meeting of the Confederated Reserve Board? "

"Father," said Ayesha, "for thousands of years your ancestors in the Arabian desert lived a life of stolid conservatism. But when they broke out under the Prophet, they did not stop until they had conquered half the world. Would you have asked Amru and Abu Bekr to sit down for a dozen years between campaigns? They went on, the Koran in one hand and the sword in the other."

The Caliph shook his head, but smiled.

"A harem-scarem existence," he said.

"That is always the way of you men when you can't answer," said Ayesha.

STORY OF SINBAD'S DEPARTURE FROM BAGDAD FOR POINTS NORTH AND WEST

TWENTY-FOUR hours after receipt of my instructions to leave Bagdad for home, I had my bags in order and was discussing passports with the Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Detours.

"We shall miss you, Sinbad," the Chairman was kind enough to say. "Seldom has a foreign correspondent come to Bagdad so completely free from preconceived notions about Mesopotamia, its language, its history, its habits, its size and population, or its geographical location. You have written only what has been pointed out to you and you have believed only what you have been told. It is a pity you must go just when the weather and Bagdad are at their best."

And in truth it is not without reluctance that I am now leaving the beautiful city in which I have spent nearly ten months crowded with the most delightful experiences. To picture Bagdad in the ravishing month of December would be a strain on my descriptive powers which the situation hardly justifies.

The greater part of the day was spent in a farewell round of visits, both official and private. Naturally, I should have begun by paying my respects to his Majesty, but he was at the moment attending a meeting of the War Cabinet, from which, as I learned subsequently, he emerged

with a very ingenious idea for a new kind of brassie grip. I therefore turned aside into the office of his Chief of Police, the good and simple Mesrour.

Mesrour shook my hand with extraordinary warmth. "I am a simple man, Sinbad," he said. "I have never been to college and I come right to the point. I am glad you are going."

"But we've been good friends, Mesrour," I said.

"Sure," he replied. "But I am responsible for the personal safety of his Majesty; and since your arrival you have been his partner in adventures that have made my hair turn white. Now that you are gone I will always know where I can find his Majesty. He will be on the links. Whither are you bound?"

"Jerusalem, likely," I said.

"Allah be with you," he said.

"But I may change my mind and start for Petrograd."

"Allah and all his angels go with you. Good morning."

From him I made my way to the apartments of the young Khan of Turkestan, where I found the young prince taking dictation on the typewriter from the Princess Ayesha. She was unfeignedly sorry to have me go, but consoled herself with the opportunity I should enjoy of studying the advance of woman in the various countries. To that end she insisted on supplying me with letters of introduction to the Lady Zenaide at Jerusalem; the Lady Aïda at Cairo; Madame Restova at Petrograd; Madame Dubost at Paris; Signora Cagliari at Romé, etc., all of whom were contributors to the Encyclopedia of the Higher Emancipation on which Ayesha is now actively at work.

The young Khan did me the honor of escorting me through the antechamber of the apartment, and as we shook hands he remarked, with that slightly worried air which has become second nature to him ever since Ayesha accepted the chairmanship of the League for the Enforcement of Domestic Peace, "Sinbad, I shall never forget your services during that great crisis when Ayesha—"

"Oh, your Highness," I exclaimed, "I have been more than amply rewarded—"

"I was going to say, Sinbad, when you see those ladies to whom Ayesha has recommended you—if you could hint that they might write their contributions on only one side of the paper—good-by, old man."

I had time only for a few brief words with the Principal Censor, whom I found in the royal vestibule, superintending a gang of plumbers' assistants who were repairing a leak in the radiator.

"Good-by, P. C.," I said, "I leave by the—"

"Never mind specifying the train, Sinbad," he whispered.

"And expect to arrive in—"

"Pray, be careful, Sinbad. Go, and the peace of Allah with you."

"P. C.," I said, "I need not describe the state of—"

"Sinbad, for heaven's sake," he pleaded, and gave me his right hand, while he placed the other over my lips.

I had scarcely completed my third prostration in the royal chamber when the Caliph spoke up, in tones that pretended to be sharp but did not lack affection:

"Why are you leaving us, Sinbad?"

"Inimitable One," I responded, "it's orders from the

home office. They think my usefulness here is at an end."

"So Bagdad is no longer of concern to the outside world?" he said curtly.

"Superb One," I said, "the poet Al Aarab has remarked, 'Happy the city which has lost its value as a news center.' There is nothing more for me to see in Bagdad, because your Majesty has succeeded in establishing perfect harmony and discipline. The food dealers are selling their wares slightly below cost. Ships are being built faster than necessary. The Minister of Munitions and Aviation insists on surrendering his rights of priority to the Minister of Anthracite and Bituminous; and the Committee on Public Stimulation is never more than seven days behind the newspapers in giving out the facts. Why should I stay? I go now to study the workings of democracy in other lands."

"So you find in Mesopotamia no mutterings of the revolutionary spirit?"

"None, Intelligent One," I said. "The throne of the Caliphs stands on bedrock."

"Ah, well," he sighed. "Perhaps ninety-six for the eighteen holes is as much as any man of my age has a right to expect. I shall miss you."

"There is always the Principal Censor, your Majesty," I said. "His short game is matchless."

"It is," cried the Caliph, "but the professional habit has got him. Yesterday he suppressed four strokes on his own score-card."

"Your Majesty has no truer servant and friend than P. C.," I said.

"Except, perhaps, yourself, Sinbad," and he held out his hand.

"Oh, your Majesty! "

"*Au revoir*, my son. Allah keep you."



PART II
WILLIAMS



THEY

WILLIAMS asked if the American people was really going to stand idly by while they were putting over on us the complete horrors of the blue Sunday.

"Who are 'they'?" I said.

"Why, all of them," said Williams with a wave of the hand around the room; and I could only wonder just how the bookcases, and the telephone directory, and the pictures on the wall, and the clock on the steeple across the way, were collaborating to fasten the Puritan yoke on our necks.

"All of them," said Williams, "who are in this conspiracy to take away the bit of personal liberty we have managed to hang on to."

"And do you believe," I said, "that any conspiracy can really reduce a free nation of one hundred and five millions to chains and slavery?"

"It's worse than that," said Williams. "It isn't one hundred and five millions. That's what they—the census people, I mean—tell you. It's four or five times as much. Just add up all the conspiracies now under way and see if the population of the United States isn't nearer six hundred million. In fact, I have the rough figures with me."

One glance at Williams' list was enough to show that I had been, indeed, living in a fool's paradise of optimism:

Blue Sunday Conspirators	40,000,000
Saloon and Race-Track Conspirators	25,000,000
Catholic Conspirators	30,000,000
Jewish Conspirators	5,000,000
Buy-a-Book-a-Week Conspiracy	13,000,000
Sinn Féin Conspiracy	20,000,000
Eat-an-Apple-a-Day Plot	15,000,000
British-Ulster Conspiracy	35,000,000
Bolshevists	10,000,000
Burleson Home and Flag Alliance	5,000,000
Beef Trust Conspirators	500
Government Ownership Propaganda	15,000,000
Buy-a-Record-a-Minute Conspiracy	20,000,000
Write-Your-Mother-Once-a-Year Conspiracy ..	55,000,000
American Federation of Labor Plot	15,000,000
Greenwich Village-Samovar-Batik Conspiracy ..	500,000
Seize-Mexico Conspiracy	30,000,000
Philippine Independence Conspiracy	10,000,000
Wear-Your-Old-Clothes Conspiracy	95,000,000

"Four hundred millions already," said Williams. "So much for your official census figures."

"But, hold on a minute, Williams," I said. "You can't go and divide people up into so many closed compartments. Those conspiracies overlap. There must be Sinn Féiners who are fond of an apple after lunch. There must be Beef Trust lawyers who believe in beer and light wines. There must be pro-Germans who write to their mothers now and then. I am personally acquainted with publishers who get off the train in the afternoon and kiss their wives in full view of the engine driver. Your figures need rectification."

"Exactly," said Williams. "That's where the additional two hundred million conspirators come in. All you have to

do is to add in the Catholic Buy-a-Book-a-Week group, the Bolshevik Eat-an-Apple-a-Day Alliance, the Irish-Jewish-Methodist-Government-Ownership group, the Ulster-Japanese-Tonsilitis Association, the Gompers-Foster-Sex Hygiene drive, the Armenian-Gary School Federation, and the Sinn Féin Out-of-Door Sleeping Clubs. Only then will you realize what the people of the United States are up against."

"And what is the remedy?" I said. "Publicity?"

Williams hesitated.

"As a rule," he said, "yes. But there are exceptions."

Williams said that he has personally and for some years past been the victim of a conspiracy in his own home, with his nine-year-old daughter Catherine in the rôle of chief conspirator. The plot always relates to Christmas and the subject matter is usually a handkerchief personally initialed by Catherine, or a shaving-towel personally hemstitched by Catherine, or perhaps a calendar with poems written by Catherine with illustrations by the author. It is true, said Williams plaintively, that Christmas comes only once a year, but with Catherine it begins to come about the middle of February when she begins to break ground, so to speak, for her Christmas present to father.

I told Williams that I should not mind myself being the object of such fond plots and seditions, and I said further that Catherine must be a pleasant thing to have around the house.

"Oh, she is," said Williams. "But don't you see the difficulty?" And he went on to describe what a time he has between the middle of February and Christmas Eve, trying not to unmask Catherine's conspiracy. The child

leaves the plot lying around all over the house. He cannot go to his bureau for a fresh shirt without stumbling upon, say, an embroidery frame which puzzles him until shrieks from Catherine command him to put the mystery down and go away. He finds spools of silk on the piano. He picks up unidentified cambrics and muslins and linen squares, and has them snatched from his hand by Catherine. The child has, of course, taken everybody else but Williams into the secret, and Williams cannot enter into routine conversation with his wife or his son or the maid without being closely watched by Catherine.

Nay, said Williams, sometime in early spring Catherine begins to put dark questions to him, invitations to guess what she is giving him for Christmas, and Williams says the strain not to guess what he already knows is really exhausting. As Christmas draws near, said Williams, he cannot move about the apartment without intruding upon Catherine and her conspiracy. It has come to the point, said Williams, where the only safe way for him to enter a room is to walk backwards ringing a large hand-bell. But that, after all, is a different kind of conspiracy, he said.

"I don't know," I said. "Between the Great Hemstitched Towel Conspiracy and the Great Sinn Féin-Blue Law-Government Ownership Conspiracy the difference does not seem to be as great as you imagine. Your part in both seems to be about the same. When they 'put over' a Christmas gift on you or 'put over' a Catholic Conspiracy on you, the essence of the matter seems to be first that you are a fairly willing accomplice, and second that you

are quite prepared to display joy or horror at what you have known all along. People who don't believe in Santa Claus insist on believing in Conspiracy as the machine that makes the world go round and in They as the engineers of the machine. And that is an infantile thing."

"What is a person to do?" said Williams.

"Persons have eyes, ears, and a mind in a more or less advanced state of development," I said. "Why not use them? What sort of a world is this, anyhow, in which things never happen through reason or natural causation or accident, but always because all sorts of wicked Theys are pulling secret wires? What kind of a man are you and what sort of nation do you belong to, that nothing happens because you want it to happen, but always because somebody else says 'Hist!' to somebody else? Here are a hundred and five million people—I am not really convinced about your six hundred millions, Williams—who are always being yanked and pushed and fooled and wheedled by They. We did not go to war because we wanted to go to war, but They shoved us into the war. We did not want prohibition, but They put prohibition over on us. We are bound to have the blue Sunday because They are going to force it upon us. They raise our rent, They scalp us at the butcher's counter, They compel our women to wear shoes with leather tops fourteen inches high. They sell us out to Great Britain. They conduct secret traffic with the Soviets—well!"

"What is the cause?" said Williams, obviously carried away on the tide of my eloquence.

"Mental laziness, greatly aggravated by war-bred superstition," I said.

"Well," said Williams, "why can't we get away from this war psychology and settle down?"

"Because they have scuttled the peace," I said.

CHEERFUL GIVERS

HOLIDAY shopping had brought Williams to the point, he said, where he found himself envying the Christmasless heathen in his darkness; he was that tired (i. e., Williams). The problem of the children at home was not a difficult one. By the first week in September they usually managed to convey a definite impression of what they wanted for Christmas, together with precise directions as to the shop window in the neighborhood where Williams's duty awaited him. But it was different with Mrs. Williams. Finding out what she wanted most was, after nineteen years, still a good deal of a task. Williams said he wished, for a few weeks, he were a Mohammedan or a Parsee, or something pagan of the sort.

I did not think it necessary to play the pedant and argue that Mohammedans are not pagans; or to point out that if he were a Mohammedan he would probably have several Mrs. Williamses to buy gifts for, if not for Christmas, then for the Fourth of July or Labor Day or whenever it is the Moslems are annually worried. But I did remind Williams of what President Butler has said: that we have a new paganism of our own and this might be the way out.

"Why does Mr. Butler think we are pagans?" said Williams with the light of hope in his eyes.

"He says," I said, "that the present generation denies the existence of law and has made personal appetite its guide

in life. He says that people think too much of their own individuality and not enough of the basic traditions upon which civilization has been built up."

I have seldom seen Williams so emphatic in approval.

"The president of Columbia University has the right dope," he said. "That is it exactly. There are no more traditions. For a good many years after we were married Christmas came easy. I bought her half a dozen pairs of gloves. Sometimes it would be silk stockings, before they became common. Sometimes I would put in extra thought; I would look around for a week or two and get her a couple of blouses. And then this individuality business came along."

"Individuality?" I said.

"Yes," he said. "Lots of people nowadays make a living by complicating things for other people and insisting that they realize their individuality. Once upon a time I used to step into the store and get myself a dozen white collars. If they didn't have them in quarter sizes I took an even 16. Nowadays I get circulars in the mail from haberdashers who want to know whether, in purchasing white collars, I make any attempt to express myself. They want to know whether I simply buy shoes to wear or shoes that will emphasize my personality. What difference it really makes I don't know. All I know is that people in the subway step just as frequently upon my individual feet to-day as they used to do upon my box toes."

"Too true," I said.

"And now it is Christmas gifts. I get circulars asking whether the things I give are just presents or whether they

reflect the soul of the recipient. Some go further. They want me to take a little time off and ask myself whether I ought to give Mrs. Williams the thing she wants most or the thing I want to give her most. That's a nice problem to unload upon a man, with business what it is."

"But these circulars go beyond asking questions, don't they?" I said. "They offer to help out."

"True," he said. "I have received circulars from people suggesting that I let them pick out a Christmas present for Mrs. Williams—something that would be sure to express her inmost self, something that would make her feel the thing was manufactured, jobbed, wholesaled, and retailed for her and her only. And in a way it is a tempting offer. All I'd have to do is to say that Mrs. Williams's telephone number is 4856 and they'll send her a book-rack that will appeal to all that is deepest in her. But I can't quite see that."

"Williams," I said, "be a pagan. Buy her a hat."

"A hat?" said Williams. "It isn't done. And I wouldn't know how to go about it anyhow. Besides, how do I know she'd like it? We sometimes differ in that respect."

"Exactly," I said. "Express your personality by getting her a hat you like. Then she will give full scope to her own individuality by changing it. The arrangement is almost ideal."

"But a hat," said Williams.

"Why not a hat? Have you ever stopped to think how intimate a part of a woman's personality is her hat?" And I showed him a picture in *L'Illustration* of a war memorial service in Notre Dame. "See how all the heads are bowed

in unmistakable emotion; yet even in such reverent moments and in such solemn places women are not required to remove their hats."

"They do in theaters and offices," he said.

"That is only for convenience," I said. "The fact that they keep them on in church shows how almost inseparable a part of her is a woman's hat. And think of the mere audacity of the stroke. There won't, in all likelihood, be another such Christmas gift in town. It's almost Napoleonic—it's—"

"Pagan," said Williams, "yes. But at my age it would be rather absurd to start buying hats for ladies. It opens up all sorts of vistas."

"Yet you want to get away from the commonplace," I said.

"If it may be done with propriety," said Williams.

"Well," I said, "what is it that Mrs. Williams does like?"

"She likes what all women of refinement like," he said. "She likes to be surrounded by beautiful things that are at the same time useful and within our means. She has a really exquisite taste for color and fabric."

"And not too popular?"

"No," he said.

"Buy her a nice smoking jacket for yourself," I said.

He reminded me that the problem was a serious one.

I told him I was quite serious. My suggestion combined all the requisites—originality, beauty, utility, safety. I pointed out how in the ordinary course of events he might be buying Mrs. Williams an afternoon wrap that he thought

she would like, and she would be buying him a smoking jacket that she thought he would like. How much safer and pleasanter all round it would be if she bought him the afternoon wrap for Christmas and he bought her the smoking jacket.

He seemed interested and I pressed my advantage.

"Buy her that smoking jacket," I said. "It will bring you closer together than any Christmas you have known. Buy her that box of Hidalgo Perfectos that goes with the smoking jacket. Buy her that extension art-bronze ash tray. Put yourself into the gift. Surround her with that holiday atmosphere which is, after all, the essence of the whole thing. What more esthetic gift can you devise for a woman of taste than a fairly good-looking man in a handsome smoking coat knocking the ash off a noble cigar into a tray that Rodin might have modeled?"

He stared out into the distance. Then he shivered slightly.

"Come out of the clouds, man alive," he said. "Talk sense."

"How can I talk sense," I said, "if I don't really know whether you want to be a pagan or a Christian for Christmas? What is it you do want to give her?"

"Oh, well, it's already done," he said. "I put in two days' thinking. Say twelve solid hours of thinking. Then I went out and bought her three pairs of gloves, three pairs of silk stockings, and a blouse. Do you think she'll be pleased?"

"Tell her about the twelve hours," I said.

REALISM

FATHER, ever since Narcissa could remember, snored in his sleep. It was not the healthy, rhythmic rumble of the natural man after a hard day's work. Such reverberations of the nasal passages have a wild beauty of their own. . . . Of tom-toms droning midnight rites in Congo forests. . . . Of dauntless cannon rolling over bridges to victory. . . . No; in Father's case it was the exudation of an all-pervasive spiritual malady, reinforced by adenoids. He did not breathe. He choked, gargled, gasped himself awake, glared a furious denial that he had ever been asleep, and went off again.

Father usually began operations immediately after supper. Narcissa tried in vain to make him call it dinner. But he said that his own father always ate supper at 6 o'clock and his grandfather before him. Immediately after supper he removed his coat and collar, unbuttoned his vest, sat down in the morris chair, lit his pipe, opened the only book he was ever known to pick up, and fell asleep. The book was "Plutarch's Lives."

Only Father always pronounced it Plut-artch. He also said Alleyxander the Great and Themistokels. . . . On the second syllable from the end. . . .

The leather cushions of the morris chair were originally green, but they were scabrous with twenty years of ash-drippings from Father's pipe. There were times when, to

flee the sight of that chair, Narcissa would have gone anywhere . . . with any one. . . . A caster was missing from the off fore leg, and as the chair sagged forward on the bias under the weight of Father, relaxed like a monstrous bread pudding, it took on the aspect of leering debauchery that was, to Narcissa's raw-nerved soul, the Heart of Evil. The wart on the right side of Father's nose was pulpos and iridescent in the lamplight.

If there was anything worse than Father asleep in the morris chair it was Father eating breakfast. Thwarted instincts, ingrowing appetites, here found their cataclysmic revenge in a monstrous prodigality of food products poured forth over napkin, table cloth, and personal raiment. Mr. Wells could have read the history of years in the cereal deposits on Father's vest. Prune juice—and sad, crabbed, dun-colored prunes they were—manipulated as Father manipulates it would make the next world war a nightmare of destruction. Or if it was grapefruit. . . . Father eating grapefruit was one of the fifteen indecisive battles of the world. . . .

The house in which Father lived was something fierce. It had not been painted since the day it was built. Not because Father was too poor to afford it, but because it was essential to the atmosphere of this story. The porch steps sagged. The lattice work under the porch showed gaps through which the poultry wandered . . . starved, scrawny, unpedigreed poultry laying eggs without purpose, without vision, in sheer mechanical reaction to the herd instinct. . . .

The plumbing was rotten. There was one particular

faucet in the bath tub which has seared itself on Narcissa's memory in letters of a decaying phosphorescence. That faucet dripped . . . dripped all day and dripped all night . . . without purpose, without challenge, without constructive protest, implacable, gravitational, simply because a washer was missing and uncle, who had been sent to the store to get a new one, had spent the money on bootleg red-eye. Narcissa lay awake through the white nights, staring at the ceiling, listening to the faucet drip . . . dripping, dripping . . . like the minister on Sunday. It was Poe's torture of the water drop on Narcissa's soul. . . . The radiator clanged Father chortled, gagged, snorted, gasped . . . drip, drip, drip. . . . She lay awake and counted. . . . "Waste! waste!" Narcissa groaned. Drip, drip, clang, clang, chortle, gag, Plut—artch, Alleyxander the Great, Themistokels—O God! O God! the shame and ugliness of it all!

Brother smoked cigarettes behind the barn all day and shot pool half of the night. He was not vicious. He was just mean. Narcissa did not look back in after days to brother with any sense of active dislike. You cannot hate emptiness. A whiff of stale tobacco . . . a nasal falsetto . . . an Adam's apple. . . .

Grandma was terrible. She pre-empted the rocking chair next to the radiator and oscillated from after supper to 10 every night, savagely rejecting every hint about going to bed. One of the rockers was broken off in front, two inches beyond where the right leg of the chair entered, and every time the old lady was negotiating the return trip the chair lurched forward and sideways and threatened to spill Grand-

ma. She screeched and woke up Father in the morris chair and they glared at each other . . . a look of hatred and suspicion . . . basilisk . . . out of the Pit. . . . No doubt Father would have been glad to precipitate Grandma out of the rocker if he had the courage. No doubt Grandma was hoping that something would result from that missing caster in Father's morris chair. But mutual malevolence sought no active discharge; it spent itself on the air, poisoning it—chlorin . . . phosgene . . . dichlorethyl sulphide. . . . And she had once been beautiful, this maternal grandmother of hers, thought Narcissa. And the Comic Spirit had used Grandma's beauty to provide a mate for Father, who gurgled in his sleep, in an unbuttoned vest, jerking his head back every little while, so that the light from the gooseneck electric lamp fell upon a gold-plated collar button.

Narcissa felt she would stifle. She groped her way to the door. She pressed her head against a veranda column, from which the paint was peeling off . . . in scabs.

Only by contrast with the hell inside did she find just tolerable, for a moment, this purgatorial landscape that stretched out on every side. How symbolic of the life inside was this flatness which ran in every direction to the horizon. Not the flatness of a pancake which calls up rich associations of brown-and-gold syrup. Not the flatness of a college professor's cap on commencement day, which calls up youth . . . youth . . . youth. . . . How long was it since she had been young? wondered Narcissa. . . . Not the flatness of a trombone emitting jazz, which evokes youth, passion, adventure, challenge. No, it was the flatness of one-half of 1 per cent. beer after it has

been in the tumbler for ten minutes—Dead Sea . . . miasma. . . .

This was Colorado, and Grandfather, who built the house, must have had an awful time finding the flat landscape which his stunted soul and the exigencies of our story demanded; but he found it. There were mountains one might have glimpsed if not for the perpetual fog. When it did not mist there were sandstorms. When it did not blow sand it rained. Not the great, warm, fertilizing rain of freer climes, but a mean, cold, chill, funereal, dripping. Drip—drip—clang—gurgle—Plut-artch, Themistokels—Ah God, the shame and pity of it! . . .

The children were dreadful. Mabel snooped around and listened. Henry had just got 37 per cent. in his arithmetic test. He never washed behind the ears.

KNIGHTS AT THE CROSS ROADS

WE were talking of this sudden lurch from a world of sad but great things into a world of things sad and mean; from a front page ablaze with the lawlessness of war and revolution into a front page placarded with the sorry lawlessness of profiteers, grafters, drunken joy-riders, and dead babies in moving-picture theaters. And some of us said that the remedy must come from better Government, and some said that the remedy must come from a co-operative citizenship, and we were just passing on, by natural sequence to Saturday's game at New Haven, when an idea came to Williams.

"What we need," he said, "is a new order of knight-hood; a secret order. We need a brotherhood consecrated to the task of making trouble on underheated trolley cars."

We asked why trolley cars, and he said not trolley cars merely, but they would do to begin with. He said that trolley cars were cold in winter because the public was too busy to make trouble. People had to reach the office at 9 and were eager to get home at 6:30, and never had the time to appear in court against railroad companies. People were timid, too; but the great difficulty was that they had no time. We needed an order of knighthood whose business it should be to make trouble. We might pay the members \$5,000 a year to get into rows and show up in court to prosecute.

The idea caught on. In less than no time we had drafted a program sufficient to keep a good-sized order of chivalry occupied for years to come. It would refuse to pay fares in trolley cars where the temperature was below 45 in December. It would refuse to pay couvert charges in hotels. It would refuse to tip ignorant or impudent waiters. It would take back unsatisfactory merchandise to the store and insist upon having one's money back as promised. It would reply to a thrust from a subway guard's knee with a right to the jaw. It would apply the same treatment to the swine who hurls himself into an overpacked subway car and crushes down women. It would insist on elevator men closing the gates to their cars before starting up or down.

"It would also smash in the face of weighing machines that refuse to weigh and slot machines that refuse to deliver chocolate," said one of us. And he went on to describe the stark fury that besets him in such cases; to this extent, that he has more than once dashed his umbrella into the simpering dials and mirrors of those public robbers, having looked around first to see that nobody was watching.

Some one brought up the question of uniforms and insignia for the new order.

"The uniform," said Williams, "would be all wool, double sewn, two buttons on cuffs, pockets stayed and tacked to prevent ripping, collars basted and felled, pants full lined and reinforced at knees and seats. In other words, the uniform will be designed by Hart, Wallach & Bloch with that touch of refined individuality which enables a man to lose himself in a crowd."

And he went on to show that anonymity was the prime

requisite for his new type of knight errant. He must not be known as a knight errant or his usefulness would be destroyed. He must be one of the crowd, concentrating in himself all the wrongs and resentments of the crowd.

We rose more and more to his idea. One of us saw how the new chivalry would cure graft in business. Why does a tradesman pay blackmail to the policeman or the labor thug? Because paying graft is cheaper than being lugged to court for obstructing the sidewalk with egg boxes. Because paying graft is cheaper than being held up on a building contract. Well, then, we would plant one of our new Samurai on Greenwich Street in the guise of an egg merchant, and we would set up another Bayard in the contracting business. And when the grafters appeared our disguised knights would tell the cop to go to the devil and kick the labor parasite out of the door. They could afford to do so because our knights would be six feet two inches high and would have no bona fide business to save from ruin.

Our eyes glowed. We saw untold possibilities in this Knighthood of Troublemakers. One of us said the idea could be applied to every phase of our national life. He said, What is the reason for our intellectual backwardness? It is that Americans are hostile to the give-and-take of conversation. Let some one in mixed company remark that it is too bad the Irish want to conquer Nova Zembla and the rest of the company, especially if the speaker is a woman, will agree, if only by their polite silence. We are too polite. A thousand knights distributed around a thousand dinner tables and instructed to say in a loud voice, "I don't think that is at all the case," would raise the level of American

culture in a week. We would instruct our knights in real reverence for womanhood. We would tell them, the next time they heard a lady say something false or foolish, to treat her rough.

Most of us thought this was going too far, and we passed on to the requirements for membership in the new order.

"Over six feet and preferably a halfback on one of the Eastern teams." Agreed.

"A quick temper." Agreed.

"A sense of humor."

That puzzled us at first. It apparently contradicted the preceding stipulation. But Williams said a sense of humor was essential.

"Don't you see," he said, "that one of the things our knights will have to contend with will be the hostility of the crowd whom they are trying to serve? If a knight refuses to pay his fare in a trolley car, and expostulates with the conductor about the heat, the other passengers will tell the knight to hire a hall. If a knight holds up a subway train because women are being trampled upon the passengers will tell him to get out and climb into his limousine. The crowd must be defended against its own spirit of servitude."

Agreed.

"He must be vowed to celibacy."

"Why? "

"Obviously. In the first place, our knight would have to spend a great many evenings away from home; in police cells, in car barns, and occasionally in hospital. But the principal reason is that women are a mighty influence for

servility. Why do men endure cold trolley cars or stock-yard subway cars? Because there is a woman waiting at home or in the theater lobby. Why do we submit to head waiters and taxi drivers? Because we must consider the feelings of the lady with us. Wives have been known to save 200-pound husbands from injury at the hands of 110-pound hat-check boys. Celibacy it must be." And it was so agreed.

But toward the end of the proceedings some one cast a chill over our high fervor. He asked how long would it be before our knights caught the New York spirit, and squeezed forward meekly when the guard said, "Plenty of room in front!"

WISDOM OF THE EAST

AFTER-DINNER speakers, since the beginning of the season, have demanded justice for nearly every conceivable cause. But why, said Williams, has no one arisen to demand common justice for the Great Wall of China? The most celebrated structure in history, with the possible exception of the Pyramids and the Parthenon, it is also the most misunderstood. Political economists abuse it, feminists sneer at it, progressives put it in the same class with Penrose and Uncle Joe Cannon. Yet no one can really tell you where the Great Wall stands, how big it is, and what it was meant for. Completed by the Emperor Tsin-Chi-Hwangti in 104 B. C., the finger of scorn was pointed at the Chinese Wall for the first time by an after-dinner speaker at the Hotel Ishtar in Antioch in the winter of 203 B. C., and for the last time at the dinner of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society a few weeks ago.

Williams came late to the dinner. The tables had been removed, and he was just in time to hear the second speaker on the program denounce the Chinese Wall which middle-class society has built around itself to ward off the intrusion of new ideas. The next speaker, a very young man, laid much emphasis on being, with others who thought like him, an oasis in the desert. The speaker after him referred to Moloch and frigid Puritanism. Having missed the first speaker of the evening, Williams was unable to say whether

the speaker had alluded to the maelstrom of competition. Departing a few minutes before the end, Williams could not say whether the Juggernaut of modern industrialism received due mention. It may be put down as a fact that the program of any radical or progressive public dinner includes one Chinese Wall, one Oasis, one Maelstrom, one Moloch, one Juggernaut, one Frigid Puritanism.

The reader will observe that out of the half-dozen popular objects of reprobation just mentioned, all but two come from the Far East. Why this should be so would make an interesting inquiry, said Williams, if not for the rule he has set himself never to wander from his main topic, differing in this respect from the ordinary after-dinner speaker, who begins with the Irishman who lost his way on a dark night, passes on to the Minimum Wage, and concludes with the negro who had a severe toothache.

What, demanded Williams, do people mean when they accuse somebody or something of being surrounded with a Chinese Wall of indifference? In the first place, China was not surrounded by its Great Wall. The Wall merely ran along part of the northern frontier. You could get into China from the east as the Japanese did when they came to study the secrets of Chinese art, or from the west, the way Marco Polo did, or from the south, the way the Buddhists did. Of course you can see how the slander about the Great Wall of China, as circulated by after-dinner speakers, has arisen. They have heard of China as an isolated nation, and they have heard of the Chinese Wall as a device to keep somebody out of China, and they assumed that the Chinese people built the Wall in the form

of a complete circle for the purpose of keeping out new ideas. Whereas the fact is that the Great Wall was built only along the northern frontier to keep out the Tartar bandits, so that the Chinese might go on living in peace, cultivating the soil, obeying their parents, honoring scholarship, and remaining civilized while Europe went on destroying her little civilizations as fast as she built them up.

Williams could see why the purpose of the Great Wall should be misunderstood. It was intended for defense against a foreign enemy and the Chinese went at it in their own topsy-turvy way. The nations of the West know what real defense means. If you want to defend yourself against the Belgians, you invade Belgium and burn something. If you want to defend yourself against Mexico, you invade Mexico and grab something. If you want to defend yourself against Japan, you order three times as many Dreadnoughts as the Japanese order—three is the recognized factor of safety in civilized countries; if you want to make your neighbor behave, you must be at least three times as strong as your neighbor. But the poor, muddle-headed Chinese, wishing to keep the Tartars out of China, could think of nothing better than to build a Wall to keep out the Tartars.

The reader will suspect, by this time, that Williams is prejudiced in favor of China. He admits it. He considers the Chinese way of doing things extremely suited to the unconventional and complete life. In China, for example, if a soldier shows no stomach for fighting they make him a general, and by placing him behind the battle line minimize the temptation to run away. In China, if

a school teacher cannot teach they give him charge of a whole school; and if he cannot maintain discipline they make him a district instructor, and if he still does not respond to treatment, they put him on the Board of Education. In China, if a college professor dislikes books they make him a college president. In China, if a motorman is continually running his train into the train ahead they remove the menace by making him a division superintendent, and if he shows no talent for organization they keep on promoting him out of harm's way until he may rise to be Public Service Commissioner and become perfectly innocuous. Always the Chinese idea is to conserve life and the social welfare, and at the same time maintain peace. Discharge an incompetent policeman and it will only create hard feeling. Make your policeman a police inspector and public order stands untouched.

Or take the question of book-reviewing, said Williams. If the Chinese have the greatest body of serious literature of any nation and the smallest body of cheap fiction, it is because of their admirable system of payment for book-reviews. Instead of paying space rates to the writer of the review they pay space to the man whose book is reviewed. The results are self-evident. Take a book of poems. In the course of time the book will receive two hundred reviews ranging from a quarter of a column to a column and a half, and will sell one hundred and fifty copies. Under our system the author receives royalties on one hundred and fifty copies to the amount of \$23.50. Under the Chinese system the author receives six dollars a column

for perhaps as much as one hundred columns of reviews, or six hundred dollars. Of course there is the question of what happens to the book-reviewers. But book-reviewers can live on very little, and in China especially the problem can hardly be a serious one.

ON THE FLOOR OF THE LIBRARY

UNFORTUNATE people who never read detective novels; or, worse still, those who pick up a mystery story and wonder what in the world any one can see in the book to keep him up till 1:30 in the morning with intermittent trips to the cold meat in the ice-box; or, worst of all, those who read the first chapter and then turn to the end to see who did the killing—such unfortunates think they are sufficiently kind when they describe the habit as a mild vice, not so hard on the family as liquor or drugs, but pernicious for the eyesight. They think they are 100 per cent. charitable when they tolerate the practice as one form of escape from the realities of a difficult world.

To such outsiders it is not given to understand that the "Mystery of the Chintz Room" or the "Smile of Gautama" is not an escape from the world but an initiation. They simply do not know that a selected course in reading from Conan Doyle to Carolyn Wells is a guide to the institutions, culture, and life outlook of the nations from China to Chili. I have set down below a mere fragment of the picture of humanity which may be built up by devoting not more than one evening a fortnight to this field of research hitherto neglected by the sociologists. The list might easily be multiplied by twenty.

(1) The common belief that the British are an open-

air people is utterly opposed to the facts. When a member of the British nobility or upper middle classes is found dead in his bed, with a mystic Oriental symbol scrawled in blood on the sheets, the mystery is rendered all the more baffling by the fact that all the windows are hermetically sealed, the door is locked from within, the transom has not been opened for years, and the ventilators are choked up—in fact, the plumbers were scheduled to arrive on the morning after the tragedy. If it were not for that grisly Oriental symbol, the obvious conclusion would be that the victim perished for lack of a breath of fresh air. Given such a bedroom—and nearly all fatal bedrooms in our fiction are of this kind—and it is a question which is the greater puzzle: how the murderer managed to get in and escape, or how the victim managed to keep alive until the murderer got at him.

(2) Economy and resourcefulness are not among the virtues of the classes addicted to being murdered in their bedrooms or in their libraries. Twenty years after the tragedy the ghastly stain is still there on the floor. All attempts at erasing the spot in the course of twenty years have failed. What the scrubbing expense must have been, even if we reckon at a much lower rate than the prevailing scale of domestic wages to-day, is obvious. What the doctor's expenses have been in the way of treatment for nervous derangements inflicted by the ghastly stain on various members of the family is easily calculable. Yet no one in all these twenty years seems to have thought of replacing the blood-stained plank with a new one, at a trifling cost if done by day labor, and for a really insig-

nificant sum if ordered from a collapsible bungalow manufacturer.

(3) Week-end guests in British baronial mansions or in wealthy residences on Long Island drink too much black coffee before going to bed. Then they lie awake all night. That is why about 2 in the morning they hear that queer, shuffling footfall down the hall to which at the moment they attach no particular meaning and the dread significance of which they realize only next morning when the host is found dead on the library carpet with his eyes fixed in a ghastly stare on the ceiling.

(4) The number of servants who have been in the employ of wealthy families addicted to violent deaths, for a period of forty years and up, and for whose fidelity the survivors can vouch as confidently as for their own husbands and wives, is truly astounding. Here, indeed, my friends, the psychoanalysts, may find the secret of my own passion for the mystery novel. Having in recent years never succeeded in keeping a house-worker for more than a couple of months, it is perfectly comprehensible how all my suppressed desires draw me to these faithful servants who stay forty years and then prefer to be the victims of cruel suspicion by the coroner rather than bring disgrace on the family. It is not overstating the case to say that if only I could find a plain cook who will stay with us for forty years, I am perfectly willing to take a chance at being found at the end of the period, upon the floor of my library with the ivory-handled paper cutter through my heart. For that matter, I should welcome an unsuccessful attempt at murder if the assassin is not apprehended until he has found

the paper-cutter. As it is, I have to tear the pages open by pulling with both hands from the top.

(5) The victims of foul play in the best British and American families never, absolutely never, cut themselves when shaving, or scrape the skin, or raise a blister. That is how the investigator from Scotland Yard or from his private office in the Equitable Life Building is enabled to detect the cause of death in an almost imperceptible red spot under the chin which the local police have overlooked and which he immediately recognizes as the characteristic bite of the rare South American adder, *Megaloptera Bannanna*. That method, if applied to the average man after he has shaved a second time for the theater, would suggest that he had been done to death by the greater part of the reptilian fauna of the South American forests.

(6) Closely allied to the preceding topic, it appears that the principal occupation of the inhabitants of South America is the manufacture or the jealous preservation of the secret of instantaneously deadly poisons unknown to modern science and leaving no visible after-effects, excepting, of course, the corpse.

(7) Insurance premiums on the lives of the British nobility must be really enormous at Lloyd's. At least one-third of the members of the House of Lords are killed every year on the floor of their libraries or at the end of their yew walks close to the abandoned garden pavilion. But it is worse than that. If you have on the one hand the aged Duke of Beaucaire with an income of a million a year, and if you have on the other hand the third son of his fifth younger brother, who was wild at school and has lost him-

self somewhere on the Rand, and if you have no less than seven lives intervening between the scapegrace nephew and the ducal title, then these seven lives are sure to be wiped out by an earthquake or a fire or a marine disaster, and it only remains for the man who masquerades as the nephew (the real nephew having died of drink in Johannesburg) to come home and finish up the Duke.

(8) Nearly everybody in a mystery novel is a consummate athlete. They escape the vigilance of the detective who is disguised as a taxi-driver, or the pursuing avengers, by getting into a taxicab at one door and leaving by the other while the cab is in motion. This will interest people coming home from the theater who have sometimes tried to open a taxi door from the inside.

(9) The wealth of Burma and Tibet in priceless jewels would be enough to pay the German indemnity ten times over. An emerald like the Eye of Gautama, a sapphire like the Hope of Asoka, a ruby like the Doom of Dhalatpur—all of them stolen from the forehead of sacred images by European adventurers—would be enough to finance British trade with Russia for the next fifty years. The fields in Burma and Tibet are cultivated entirely by women. The male population consists solely of priests, who are off in the West for the purpose of recovering the hallowed jewels and visiting the vengeance of Brahmaputra on the sacrilegious plunderers. Usually they are disguised as elevator runners at the Savoy or the St. Regis.

People who do not know think detective fiction is a vice, whereas, it is, like Mr. H. G. Wells, a liberal education.

TRUMPET CALLS TO DUTY

THERE was one thing in the President's address for which Williams was particularly grateful. At no point in his speech did President Harding summon him, Williams, to face the challenge of new responsibilities and new horizons.

"But the President spoke at great length of the serious duties confronting the American people," I said. "At that busy moment it is not likely that Mr. Harding was thinking of you by name, but he must have included you with the rest of the one hundred and fifteen millions."

"I said Challenge, not Duty," said Williams. And he went on to explain that he hoped, humbly, that he had always done his duty as a man and a citizen and so expected to continue. But it irritated him constantly to be challenged about things.

He said it had got so that he couldn't pick up his favorite weekly magazine without running slap into half a dozen challenges on as many pages. The opening paragraph wanted to know what he, Williams, was going to do about the challenge of Labor. On the first inside page he found himself right up against the challenge of a Free Motherhood. Then in swift succession, Williams said, he had to face Jugo-Slavia's challenge to the conscience of humankind, the challenge of the new scenery for Macbeth, the challenge of the new dances, the challenge of Oskaloosa's

successful experiment with the single tax, the challenge of the new spirit in the Church, the challenge of the new psychology, and the challenge of the new bran-and-mineral oil diet.

Williams said he did not always want his weekly editor to agree with him; but in view of the cost of white paper he sometimes wondered how the editor could afford to challenge him so many times a week for 15 cents, or \$5 a year by subscription.

"It is good for your digestion and your soul," I said, "to be brought up short like that. It keeps you from going soft with complacency. It saves you from turning into a fossil. It puts you on the defensive. It makes you put questions to yourself. It stimulates you."

"Well, now, stimulate," said Williams. "I don't object to being stimulated by things I read. I am used to book reviews in which the reviewer says that the author is all wrong in his facts about dehydrated potatoes as a preventive of war, but that the book is nevertheless a stimulating one. Now, I may be finicky, but while I don't mind being stimulated by the influence of dried potatoes on war, I resent being asked to meet the Challenge of the Dehydrated Potato. I don't like to have potatoes thrown up to me like that. It makes me want to throw them back."

"That in itself is a good sign," I said. "It is much better than stagnation."

Williams said it was just as bad in the monthly publications. He picks up a magazine and naturally he turns first to the color advertisements. And the first thing he knows

some one is asking him how about that Amco Collapsible Double-Porcelained Kitchen Cabinet which he should have got for his wife long ago and so saved her 3,400 steps a day? Once upon a time the color pages used to suggest that it would be nice if Mrs. Williams owned an Amco Dishwasher. Later they began saying that it was Williams' duty to buy his wife an Amco. But nowadays they ask him whether he is meeting the challenge of the Amco. Sometimes the challenge is reinforced by a clear-eyed citizen with a close-cropped mustache who points his finger directly at Williams, who resents the gesture acutely.

"It gets to you just the same," I said.

"It does not," he said with quite a flash of spirit. "It only hurts Mrs. Williams. I should have bought her the Amco long ago if not for that donkey with the eloquent forefinger. And it's just as bad in the newspapers. Have I met the challenge of my helpless dependents by taking out a twenty-year endowment non-collapsible policy? Have I met the challenge of the Silent Reaper by making my will? Am I keeping faith with my lungs? Have I met the challenge of my pancreas? Everybody speaks to me as though I were walking in the midst of a crime wave."

Williams said it was even worse than that. Once upon a time if he had a bad headache he took a dose of bromides and went to bed. But now it seems that to meet the challenge of a headache you must get your tonsils cut out, and the proper way to repel a challenge from lumbago is to have your teeth pulled. And still worse, said Williams. Nowadays, if your head doesn't hurt it is a much more sinister thing than if it did, and if you work hard without

getting tired, it means that something dreadful is going to happen. So it isn't enough to meet challenges as they come up. You must go out hunting for trouble.

"As if I were a giddy knight-errant," said Williams, "instead of a busy man with no time for adventure."

I told him that men like him who were too busy to do their duty by their higher selves and by humanity were a drag on progress.

He was visibly hurt. He said that he was sincerely anxious to do his share in the building of a new world. His mind was far from closed to new ideas. But there must be a limit, mustn't there? After all, the elementary duties of the world have to be met. And where would we land if everybody knocked off work half a dozen times a day to meet the challenges addressed to his old-fashioned methods? If every farmer threw aside his plow to answer the challenge of every new gasoline tractor, and if every school teacher threw her copybooks into the waste-basket to meet the challenge of the New Education, what would happen?

He really did seem to have a point there, and I suggested that perhaps there was something in this knight-errant business he had just alluded to. There ought to be a special class in society whose business it should be to meet challenges as they crop up in the weeklies and monthly advertising sections. And while the scrap was on, the rest of us could stick to our work.

He thought that might be a way out, but he was not very hopeful. He said that judging from the number of challenges on the market, the greater part of the adult working population must be employed in answering them. And

he showed me a circular letter from the school he sends his children to. It was addressed to Parents in red ink and it said, "How Are You Answering the Challenge of Your Child? "

"Well, now, child," said Williams. "You know how we all of us meet the challenge of our children. We let them have what they want. It comes hard to meet the challenge of eight pairs of shoes a year, but we manage somehow. It comes harder to meet the challenge when they grow up a bit and want to be helped out in simple quadratics. But after all, if you feed a child and clothe him and look after him when he is ill and give him a few minutes of your conversation at night and scatter a few books around the house for him to run into, what else is there to do in the way of meeting the challenge of childhood? "

He went on to say that, as a matter of fact, this business of meeting the Challenge of the Child usually kept him and Mrs. Williams so occupied that they had little time left for answering the Challenge of Labor, and the New Spirit in the Church, and Jugo-Slavia, and the excess-profits tax, and the new bran compounds.

THE REINDEER AND THE WILL TO BELIEVE

FOR himself, Williams said, the problem of Santa Claus is no longer a pressing one. Catherine, his youngest, is well into her tenth year and has been for some time in possession of the real facts regarding the chimney and the reindeer. How she found out, he is not quite sure, but not from him or Mrs. Williams. Frankly, they were both a bit old-fashioned in this respect, and besides, they wouldn't have had the heart.

It was different, said Williams, with his little nephew, who is six, and who learned the truth about St. Nicholas the other day from his mother, a thoroughly conscientious young woman who gives a great deal of time to her children. When the boy heard the bitter news that there is no Santa Claus, said Williams, he sat down on the floor and bawled. Williams thought it rather hard on the kid. They might have waited another year or two.

"Not at all," I said. "The truth will never hurt a child."

"Child!" said Williams. "A mere baby, with plenty of time ahead of him to shuffle off his illusions."

"The besetting sin of the past," I said, "has been an excessive tolerance of Superstition among the very young. There was the Superstition of the reindeer down the chimney. There was the Superstition of the stork through the window. There was the Superstition of who made the

earth and the sky. Happily we are getting rid of all of them."

Williams sighed and said his sister-in-law was reading up on how birds and fishes are born, with an eye to his little nephew.

"He can't begin to learn too soon," I said. "Toleration of the present ignorance on the subject would be a crime against the child."

"You are too hard," said Williams.

"I am not too hard," I said. "I am quite ready to make exceptions. I believe, for instance, that after people have reached the voting age they should be allowed to believe in Santa Claus. That is the time when we must begin to respect people's illusions. That is the time when tolerance is more than virtue, when it becomes a necessity. Take, for instance, a severe case of indigestion."

"Among voters, you mean?" said Williams.

"Both among children and voters," I said. "Suppose your little nephew saw a green apple and was tempted and fell and proceeded to yowl his head off. Once upon a time we should have been sorry for his incoherent emotions. But your sister-in-law, being a modern mother, quite properly insists that the child is old enough to tell just where the pain is, and having received his dose, he should keep quiet.

"Very well. But suppose your nephew grows up and publishes a volume of verse. How do the reviewers treat him? They say something like this:

"There are even times when Sandburg is unsure about furnishing the clue to the half-realized and half-expressed

vagaries of the imagination. But though the meaning is not always clear, there is no mistaking his emotion.'

"That is what I mean by tolerance. If you insisted that every poet at all times must say plainly what is the matter with him, what would be the outlook for a renaissance of letters in America?"

"Clever, but specious," said Williams.

"Fact," I said; "it is being done every day. Or suppose your little nephew got hold of a pencil and paper and drew an elephant with three legs and a drastic reversal in the position of the tail and the trunk. Once upon a time we should have patted him on the head and left him to his illusions. To-day your sister-in-law will quite properly point out his errors and not permit him to grow up with a distorted conception of the universe. Very well. Suppose now your nephew grows up and publishes 'Civilization in a Nutshell.' What do the reviewers say about it? They say this:

"'Mr. Williams, in his "Civilization in a Nutshell" has made the most notable contribution of the last twenty years to historical literature. It is true that Mr. Williams now and then is betrayed into statements which cannot altogether pass without challenge. He speaks of Athens as the capital of Indo-China and refers to Luther's early school days in New Orleans. There is a notable description of Cleopatra calling up Mark Antony on the telephone, in which the amazing vividness of style does not altogether atone for the deviation from historic fact. Hardly less brilliant is the picture of a celebration of the feast of Ramadan at Mecca, where 200,000 devout Moslems

consume the flesh of 10,000 swine, not counting sundries. It is true the Ramadan is a fast and not a feast, and that Mohammedans abhor pork, yet that narrative will stand high above anything in Gibbon or Prescott, in its thought-provoking quality.' "

"I should think it would provoke a good deal of thought," said Williams.

"That again is tolerance," I proceeded utterly disregarding his interruption. "Or suppose your little nephew asserts that little boys are made out of chocolate, and little girls out of whipped cream. Your sister-in-law immediately, and quite properly, reminds him of the ascertained facts about the eggs of the hen and the turtle. Very well. But suppose your little nephew grows up and draws pictures of men apparently made out of second-hand anvils, and women apparently fashioned out of cantaloupe crates. What, then, do the critics say? They say that the like of Mr. Williams's men and women was never revealed to mortal eye, but that we must accept them as the inner vision of an ultimate reality. That again is tolerance."

"Don't they sometimes call that sort of thing stimulating?" said Williams.

"Quite frequently," I said. "Sometimes it is stimulating. Sometimes it is thought-provoking. Sometimes it is challenging. The point is this: If you should walk across Broadway in the accepted fashion, namely, on your feet, you would be making no original contribution to the soul-progress of the race. But if you stood on your head in front of the Woolworth Building, you would be a stimulating, thought-provoking, challenging phenomenon to ten thou-

sand people and the traffic cop. That is why we must be tolerant with grown-up people when they stand on their heads. But children can get on very well without Santa Claus."

"I don't see the connection," said Williams.

"It is simple," I said. "We have taken away Santa Claus from the children, but we grown-ups simply cannot go on without our Santas, that is to say, without our myths. Your little nephew is required, quite properly, to know why he does things. But if he grows up to be a Pragmatist he need not know where he is going so long as he is on his way; otherwise he stagnates. Your little nephew should be made to know the proper compass directions for an elephant's trunk and tail. But for us it is quite proper to be confronted with the thought-provoking statement that an elephant picks up peanuts with his tail; otherwise we might not think at all. Your little nephew will soon learn that 2 and 2 make 4. But as a challenge to the adult mind it is quite proper to say that 2 and 2 make 5; otherwise we might not be in line with the march of the human spirit. Our forward urge to-day is largely conditioned by a faith in Soviet paradises and super-Shakespeares coming down the chimney. Who pulls us forward to-day if not Dasher and Prancer and Donder and Blitzen? Would you destroy our faith in them?"

"All I can say is, it's queer," said Williams. "You are tolerant with full-grown men and women and you come down hard on my kid nephew."

"We need tolerance more than he does," I said.

THE FILING CABINET AND THE CHILD

IN the afternoon of May 27 I was fingering through the tray marked Clippings on my desk, in search of something Mr. Bernard Shaw said the other day, and I came across an unopened letter. The postmark was somewhere out West and the date was January 16. It occurred to me that if that letter was ever going to be answered it ought to be answered soon. Mr. Shaw might wait. He would soon be speaking again without question and one of two things would happen. He would either repeat himself, in which case there would be nothing lost by waiting; or he very probably would contradict himself, in which case there would be a distinct gain in waiting.

Besides, I was not at all sure that I should find the clipping with Mr. Shaw's remarks in the tray marked Clippings. That is the disadvantage of distributing things into trays marked Clippings, Incoming Mail, Outgoing Mail, Topic Suggestions, etc. It makes it so hard to find anything. Under the older system of letting things accumulate on the desk I am convinced that I should have come across that letter of January by the middle of March at the latest. Under the old system there came a time when the desk and the adjoining table and the surrounding chairs simply would hold no more. Once so often a general housecleaning became imperative, in the course of which pretty nearly everything was sure to turn up.

Not so under the efficiency system. Everything being presumably just where it ought to be, it would show lack of confidence in efficiency methods to look for an unopened letter in the Clippings tray, for a pair of movie tickets in the Foreign Correspondence tray, or for the matches in the Topic Suggestions tray, where such things usually find their way. At the present moment I have a strong suspicion that Mr. Shaw's remarks are somewhere in the Odds and Ends tray, and I shall find them some day when I am hunting for an item on Footbinding in China.

The letter of January 16, when opened, turned out to be a printed questionnaire from the Civic Forum of a certain Western town requesting a concise statement of my views on the New Education. It said that similar requests had gone out to three thousand other people all over the country and the answers would be published in the form of a tabulated statement arranged by geographical divisions, States, and communities, ranked according to population and per capita wealth.

The old system of letting things accumulate on the desk and the chairs instead of distributing them into trays had another advantage. It was a great time saver. By putting things into trays and clearing them out every week, one does things and answers things that need not be answered or done at all if one only waits long enough. People say, and quite rightly, that the history of the Great War cannot be written for a good many years to come because we are too near to the war for the right perspective. I think the same thing is true of Topic Suggestions and Incoming Mail. For instance, the other day in cleaning up a chair for a

visitor to sit on I came across a February magazine containing an article on the Sex War which I had been urgently requested to read by the young woman librarian uptown. As I glanced at the February article on Sex War on May 21, it no longer seemed necessary to read it. In the first place, what the author said wasn't true. In the second place, the author had published in the April number of another magazine an article on Woman Insurgent which contradicted all that he had said in February. So here was a distinct case of time saving.

I wondered if the same thing wasn't true about the New Education. The letter asking for my views on the New Education was dated, as I have said, January 16. It was now May 27. It was obvious that if I tried to discuss the New Education as it was in the middle of January the views I expressed would now be obsolete. I was convinced that several revolutions in educational theory must have taken place since January, though how many and of what nature I could not say. All through March and the greater part of April I had been traveling about the country with only intermittent access to the newspapers. After that I had been away on vacation for some weeks and the only newspaper we could get was Mr. Hearst's *Evening Journal* of the day after to-morrow.

My first impulse, on the basis of such newspaper reading as I was able to accomplish, would have been to say that nothing new in education had happened either by States or by geographical divisions. In Ogden, Utah, I discovered that the Captain and the Katzenjammer Kids were still at work on the problems confronting them in New York City

in April, 1903, and up in Maine in the summer of 1911. In Denver I learned that the Joneses were still keeping it up, and down on Long Island I saw by the papers that in spite of the enormous increase in the cost of lumber and consequent stagnation in the building industry, the supply of rolling pins in the comic strips showed no sign of exhaustion. Popular education in a vital sense was apparently unchanged.

Apparently. At heart I knew that unless the entire temper and habit of the country had altered, several pedagogical revolutions must have taken place without my being aware of the fact. I recalled how swift and radical hitherto have been the transformations of educational theory and practice. It was right that this should be so. We all know that the secret of education is to win and hold the attention of the child. And we all know that nothing so wins the attention of the child, or, for that matter, of the adult, as speed and variety. School can never become monotonous to the child who comes into class every morning not knowing whether teacher will be sitting on the floor in accordance with a new Psychology of the Child Soul or practising a New Approach into the Juvenile Mind by doing handsprings on the window sill.

Whatever else we are, we are not a stagnant nation. Our educational systems flourish in rapid succession. Frequently several educational systems flourish side by side in the mind of the child and sometimes on top of each other. I have known of families with two children aged, say, twelve and nine and a half, in which the elder practises a system of penmanship sloping from left to right, while the younger

writes straight up and down. It is not a rare occurrence to find the same child who, happening to fall in the transition period between two systems of penmanship, will simultaneously slant from left to right and go straight up and down. This involves a certain loss in legibility.

Sometimes I cannot help wondering whether there isn't more than one reason for this unceasing experimentation in educational methods. No doubt the main reason is our desire to keep our children in line with progress. But also there is a certain restlessness on the part of the parents. "In other words," one old-fashioned critic has remarked, "it is not only the children who fidget." A zest for experimentation is one of the notable traits of the modern temper, and one can always find a child to experiment upon.

Consequently I must hasten to send in my views on the New Education to the Civic Forum out West; provided, that is, the letter doesn't get lost in the tray marked Outgoing Mail—Urgent.

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

I AM [he said] a reporter on a morning paper. One day my city editor hit upon an idea no one had ever had before. He sent me out to interview a number of citizens and find out what were the six best novels in all literature. I was to interview people of all sorts so as to make the result truly representative.

I went to see the Collector of External Revenue, and asked him what were the six greatest novels ever written. He was glancing over the Past Performances on the sporting page, but he threw the paper aside, invited me to sit down, and gazed out of the window.

"My favorite novel," he said, "has always been 'Tom Jones.' After that I should place 'Vanity Fair,' which I consider the best thing Dickens ever wrote; 'Ivanhoe,' 'Huckleberry Finn'—do you remember that story about the grave of Christopher Columbus?—'Père Goriot,' by that fellow—what's his name?"

I suggested Balzac.

"Bawlzac, that's the man, and 'Anna Karenina,' by Tolstoy."

I thanked him and he said, "Not at all," and picked up the sporting page and put his feet in their usual place on the desk.

From him I went to Mr. Montrose Jones, the celebrated composer of "The Yucatan Rag." He pondered my ques-

tion while the Italian bootblack finished polishing his shoes.

"Never since I have thought on the subject," he said, "have I had the slightest doubt that 'Tom Jones' holds first place among all works of imaginative literature. After that I should say my favorites are 'Vanity Fair,' 'Ivanhoe,' by Charles Dickens, 'Huckleberry Finn'—do you recall that incident about the frog that was filled up with buck-shot?—and, let me see."

I suggested "Père Goriot," by Balzac.

"Just what I was trying to recall," he said. "How many is that? Five? Well—"

I suggested that "Anna Karenina," by Tolstoy, has been well thought of.

"Right," he said. "These are the six authors whom I should never think of omitting from my library."

I thanked him and he said, "Don't mention it," and rang for the barber and the manicure. From him I went to Miss Genevieve Desmond, principal woman in "The Girl from Gallipoli."

She looked up from her copy of *Munsey's*. "It is always so hard to pick out the six best from a world of excellent novels," she said. "And, of course, I don't know what scholars and such people may think, but my own opinion is that Dickens's 'Tom Jones' has never been surpassed. After that, but only a little bit behind, I should put 'Huckleberry Finn'—do you remember that story of the French waitress who could only understand English?—'Ivanhoe,' 'Vanity Fair'"—she hesitated.

"Of course," I said, "there is Balzac's 'Père Goriot.'"

"Yes," she said, "and for sixth place I am undecided between Tolstoy and 'Les Misérables.'"

Such unanimity of opinion was gratifying, though I was afraid it would look rather monotonous in print. However, the truth was what I was after, and as a man of some education as distinguished from a mere reporter I was gratified at the wide diffusion of high literary taste. My last interview was with the Professor of Classical Paleography at the University. He put aside his copy of Plato in the original Greek and said:

"The six novels which I have found most entrancing are 'Sherlock Holmes,' 'Lady Audley's Secret,' Miss Corelli's 'Romance of Two Worlds,' 'David Harum,' 'The Lady in White,' and 'The Last Days of Pompeii.' I invariably read myself to sleep with the last named book."

The city editor, however, discarded Professor Blankley's list as evidently misrepresentative of the public's taste.

I am all the more inclined to agree with the findings of my newspaper friend because they coincide with my own impressions. As far as I can recall, no city editor has had the original idea of interviewing people on the six greatest plays ever written, but it is my firm belief that a symposium on the subject, participated in by Mr. Charles F. Murphy, Tris Speaker, the Superintendent of the Municipal Lodging House, and Mr. Henry Ford, would give us the following list: "Ædipus Rex," "Hamlet," "The Merchant of Venice," "Faust," "The Misanthrope," and "The School for Scandal," while a small minority represented by President Lowell and Colonel House would hold out for "Charley's Aunt" and "A Trip to Chinatown."

This is merely an opinion, but it is based on the fact that the Modern Theaters, which are continually being organized for the benefit of the working classes and the people of the East Side, devote themselves exclusively to the Greek drama, Synge, Wedekind, and Giacosa—the last name appearing in a variety of spellings—whereas President Wilson went only twice to the theater in New York, so far as I can recall, and the first time he went to see “The Pink Lady,” and the second time he saw “Grumpy.” Now, “Grumpy” was good fun, but, after all, there were serious plays running in New York at the time and I thought that Presidents of republics always went to the Comédie Française or some such high-brow institution. Precisely because we have no Comédie Française I thought the whole weight of official prestige should be thrown in favor of such timid approaches as we have made to the real thing. I imagine that M. Millerand, as a man, would rather go to see Fred Stone than Walter Hampden, but what are Presidents for if not for the purpose of pressing buttons at the opening of fairs, and laying cornerstones, and encouraging the drama? However, that is not the point.

The point is rather that when it comes to picking the six best examples of anything, it is the plain people who stand up for the highest and sanest that men have written and practised; and it is the college professors who are always kicking over the traces. I can conceive no more dangerous force in nature than a professor of economics or sociology before a Board of Investigation. He is apt to say anything. Ask Tris Speaker, and he will tell you that “Tom Jones” is the best novel; that women on the whole should not vote;

that the proper number of children in a modern family is six; that \$1,200 a year is enough for any family to live on; that reading, writing, and arithmetic are the basis of every sound public-school education; and that divorce should be made much more difficult. Ask your professor of economics, and he will demand a minimum of \$5,000 a year, the suspension of marriage, the abolition of the family—the future to be provided for perhaps by adopting the little boys and girls of the Chinese. Your baseball player would probably say that his favorite virtue is self-sacrifice, his favorite character in history Abraham Lincoln, and his favorite recreation taking the baby out in a perambulator. Professor Smith will say that his favorite virtue is insubordination, his favorite character is Cæsar Borgia, and his favorite recreation is reading Ibsen's "Ghosts."

The only thing that occurs to me is that both men would be just about equally sincere. In speaking for publication most of us say what we are expected to say, and if we don't our statements will be rectified in the interests of good copy. You can see for yourself that there would be nothing to a headline like "Baseball Player Likes Movies," or "College Professor Enjoys Hamlet."

ADVENTURES OF THE LITERAL MINDED PEDESTRIAN

NOT in the way of boastfulness, but on the contrary, with a definite sense of regret at his own shortcomings, he would allude now and then to his almost total lack of acquaintance with American Poetry of the Harding era. That fact was clearly established before we had covered half the distance up town.

As we came out into the street and into the premature twilight of an afternoon heavy with the promise of snow he remarked on the fairy spectacle of the Hudson Terminal Building, the Telegraph Building and the eastern wall of Broadway, their fronts ablaze with golden lights. Only he did not call it fairyland. Neither did he speak of 5,000 wax tapers glowing about the altars of business, as possibly Amy Lowell might. Neither did he speak of the wanton city, arraying herself in her night jewels, as Carl Sandburg might.

Instead, he said:

"Did it ever occur to you what a considerable part of business nowadays is done after business hours? During the day a person goes through a large number of motions which I suppose are necessary to business. He reads his letters in the morning and dictates answers, but only the less important ones. Those letters that call for consideration and important decisions he postpones till the early eve-

ning. He calls people up on the telephone and is called up on the telephone. He attends conferences in which some questions are settled but more questions are raised; these he postpones until evening to think over. He attends prolonged luncheons at which business is discussed with very much the same result. He interviews customers and clients and gets the data for contracts and briefs which he develops after 5 o'clock, or maybe 6 o'clock. It is only when the secretaries and stenographers have gone home, and the telephone stops ringing, and people stop coming in to interrupt on the pretext of business, that a business man really finds the time to think and decide. The streets grow quiet, the office boys stop quarreling in the anteroom and go home, and the office takes on a religious hush. Or it is very much like my wife at home—when she has put the children to bed. That is the only time, she says, she can sit down and recall that she has a mind capable of functioning. You know how it is with your artists and authors. They do their work in summer up in the Maine woods. Well, we can't afford to get away for four months, so we stay in the office after six. It is rather interesting, isn't it, to think of several thousand men behind these brilliantly lighted windows just settling down to their day's work? "

An important bit of business in connection with the Help Wanted, Female, columns took us to one of the newspaper offices on Park Row. We were for three or four minutes part of the solid, human mass surging homeward toward Brooklyn Bridge. But my companion did not identify himself with the mighty Pulse Beat of the City. He did not, on the one hand, rise to Walt Whitman's joy in the myriad

faces of Mannahatta. Neither did he succumb to a latter-day hatred for the brutal machine called Downtown which sucks in its human fuel every morning and spews out the ashes and cinders every evening—across Brooklyn Bridge.

He said:

“Brooklyn is really an extraordinary place. It is full of all kinds of people, whereas you fellows in the writing line are in the habit of speaking of the Brooklyn type. There isn’t such a type. Or why would they be buying half a dozen different evening papers? Do you see how the newsboy knows them as they come at him and jerks out his *Journal* or *World* or *Globe* or *Mail*? And if he doesn’t recognize you, see what he does. He sizes you up. He shoots just one glance at you and whips out a *Sun* from under his left arm. Have you ever stopped to think what difference it makes whether a Brooklyn man asks for a *World* or a *Sun*? Not to mention the *Eagle*. It means that he feels one way or another about the Treaty, and Mr. Harding, and the labor unions, and Fontaine Fox, and Maurice Ketten, and the Bolsheviks, and almost anything you can think of. It is really striking what an enormous number of people live in Brooklyn.”

Strange, I thought, that a man should be walking in the crowd and yet be so apparently dull to the Soul of the Crowd, as it is frequently called in the weekly publications—should be so dull to the colossal Rhythm of Democracy. That was his neglected education.

As we crossed City Hall Park and turned up Broadway he failed to remark on the pillar of mist which is Broadway in the distance between its high walls. He observed that

the streets were on the whole cleaner than they used to be. He thought that the city as a whole was improving in that respect, and he wondered whether we oughtn't to attribute to this fact the steadily decreasing rate in infant mortality. He thought the automobile killings were horrible, and suggested the time might soon come when motor traffic below Fourteenth Street would be prohibited, at least passenger traffic. He did not see that the business of the city would come to a standstill if everybody had to use the Subway or the "L" down town. He would prohibit the use of the automobile for passengers everywhere on the East Side. No point in that section is more than a ten-minute walk from the "L" and the children had to play somewhere.

A little above Canal Street we struck the southward bound crowd, from the garment factories. Though it was quite a task making headway against the crowd, he never once spoke of ourselves as breasting the torrent of weary life flowing back from the factories towards the tenements. I suppose if the man's life depended on it he could not have framed a generalization or a metaphor. The gift for identifying himself with the Life Forces was denied him.

He said, instead:

"If I came home as tired as most of these girls and men do, I think all I could manage would be just to climb into bed. I suppose some of them do, for that matter. And I imagine there are a good many others who have tasks awaiting them at home, like preparing supper, or a sick mother to look after, or letters to answer from unhappy relatives out in Poland, or Calabria, or Armenia even. But just by looking I couldn't tell which of these girls are going home to a

cheerless night, and which of them have engagements for the theater, or the movies, or a Socialist meeting, of which I understand there are a great many. Frequently it is a combination meeting, concert and ball. There is also a good deal of miscellaneous dancing on the East Side, and there are the singing societies and lectures; and of course the evening schools."

He thought there were a great many people on the East Side.

Concerning Central Park he did not say that it was an innocent smile on the painted face of Babylon. He said that the electric lights were a hardship on young people who had no other place to do their courting. We parted at Seventy-second Street.

"It has been an experience," I said.

"Yes," he said, "it was a nice walk."

OUR HIGHER SELVES

WILLIAMS was not at all sure that thirty minutes a day devoted to "10,000 Notable Facts," in limp leather binding, would equip a man for the purposes of social intercourse.

"You think," I said, "that 10,000 facts are not enough to hold the ladies spellbound?"

Williams said 10,000 facts were too much. He thought ten facts would be much better, and two or three would be ideal. And he cited a recent experience.

He said it was just an ordinarily intelligent after-dinner conversation. It touched, among other things, on two hemispheres, two sexes, three best-selling novels, two significant plays, three generations (the young, the young at heart, and the old), three epochs in history (ancient, medieval, and modern), two possible ways of paying off the German indemnity, two divorce cases in the newspapers, examined not at all for their sordid details but for their significance as social documents, two striking examples of spiritistic phenomena, three possible solutions for the Russian problem, with a few casual references to Shantung, literary censorship, and Eugene Debs.

I suggested that, even at that rate, 10,000 facts, if judiciously employed, might suffice.

"The trouble," said Williams, "is that half of the company seemed to have mastered 5,000 facts out of the 10,000.

and the other half of the company had the other 5,000 at their finger tips. And so their minds did not meet."

In the case of German reparations, said Williams, it happened that the lady on his left was convinced that the Allied policy was headed straight for disaster and she set out to prove it to a man across the table who was of the opinion that Lloyd George was not half severe enough. She called his attention to a special dispatch in the *New York Call* which showed that Germany had already paid, in coal and ferro-manganese, more than twice the value of all the factories destroyed in Northern France.

The gentleman across the table replied that he made it a point not to read the *Call*, as he abhorred its political views and distrusted its news. On the other hand, he begged to remind her of a recent item in the *New York Times* which showed that Germany was secretly drilling an army of a million men for whom Krupps was busy night and day providing heavy guns and trench mortars. The lady said that she never believed anything she saw in the *Times* touching on either Germany or Russia. What really mattered, she went on to say, was the present status of the Silesian sugar beet refineries as described on page 13, column 6, of the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, just below the victrola ad. Her opponent replied that the *Public Ledger* seldom came his way, but that a letter to the editor of the *Burlington (Iowa) Hawkeye* revealed an extraordinary increase in the output of cotton hosiery at Dresden and Leipzig which must be read in connection with the claims put forward by the Germans in London. Williams's neighbor retorted that the *Hawkeye* letter was news to her, even assuming that it was

genuine and that the writer knew what he was talking about.

Williams said that if there is anything more amazing than the intimate knowledge of the inner history of the court of Montenegro displayed by some people, it is their ignorance of who is the present Governor of New York State. The trouble with facts would seem to be the same as with farm crops. The total output is enormous, but the distribution is exceedingly uneven. Not long ago he met an ambitious young school teacher from one of the high schools who had never heard of G. K. Chesterton. Only the other day a New York Alderman said that the name of Einstein was new to him. Surely, said Williams, that charming schoolmarm must sometimes glance through the department store advertisements, and that Alderman must look at the stock quotations or the sporting page. In that case, how could they have missed Chesterton and Einstein? It made him wonder if anybody ever does read the newspapers.

I suggested that people do, but remember only what they wish to.

"But that," said Williams, "is precisely the trouble with 10,000 Facts. It permits too wide a choice. There is so much for everybody to know that nearly everybody in any group of intelligent people knows something different. You would suppose that if there is any subject on which there was a common fund of information it would be the movies. But when we took up, at this same dinner party, the influence of motion pictures on popular morals, we ran up against extraordinary differences not in opinion, which would be natural enough, but in facts."

Williams believes, and so told the company at dinner,

that the movie is undermining civilization. He told them that just now on his way up from the subway station he had walked five blocks, and he thought he was walking through Babylon at its worst. One movie theater offered to tell him, for the modest sum of 25 cents, the Truth About Husbands. Half a block further on he could have found out everything about the Price Women Pay. After that it was something about the Sins of the Fathers. After that it was one long gallery in which everything was wrong—wives, husbands, children, doctors, clergymen, railroad presidents. Williams said he never goes to the movies, but how in the face of the facts could the thing be anything but a menace?

The man across the table who knew all about Lloyd George, leaned forward and asked Williams if he had seen the screen version of "Way Down East."

"No," said Williams.

"Or 'Over the Hill'?"

"No," said Williams.

"Or 'Black Beauty'?"

"No," said Williams; and being on the whole, of a disposition far from bigotry or prejudice, he could not help wondering whether he ought not to have made himself safer on the moral facts of the movie problem. But with fifteen million linear feet of film released every year, what was a man to do?

I told him that I failed to see that he had any cause for regret.

"Not regret talking for ten minutes at a stretch about something I knew very little about?" said Williams.

It seemed absurd that I should have to point out to Wil-

liams the fundamental mistake he was making. He was confusing facts with conversation; at least as conversation is understood and practised by us of the intelligent classes. I pointed out to him that it was different with the lower classes, whose conversation is built upon a few universal facts like the weather, or food profiteers, or children, or the common physical ailments. As a result, the dinner-talk of the masses is apt to be somewhat lacking in dramatic conflict, but it does manage to get fairly close to the truth of things.

"I don't see why you say the lower classes," said Williams.

"Then you did get around to the weather?" I said.

Williams said that they got through with the war of the sexes and the German indemnity by 9 o'clock, when some one brought up the subject of an open winter. Thereupon his hostess smiled happily at her husband and everybody began to agree with everybody else. When Williams said good-by at 10:30, the lady who knew all about Lenin's agricultural reforms in Turkestan was telling the man who knew everything about Krupps' secret dividends that we had yet to discover a substitute for the old mustard plaster in the treatment of elementary colds. Williams said he had to tear himself away.

THE DANGEROUS AGE

WE had been talking about London, and the Allies and the Germans, and two hundred and twenty-six billion marks, and seven and a half billion dollars, and twenty-four million tons of coal, and 12 per cent. on German exports, and discount at $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and we had now and then mixed up tons of coal with marks, and discount with compound interest, but, on the whole, not much more seriously than the London Conference did. And so we got back to the original Peace Treaty.

"What, as a matter of fact," said Williams, "do you think was the real cause of the mess at Versailles?"

"I am the only one in town who isn't quite sure," I said. "But sometimes I am inclined to think it was because they had too many young men at the Peace Conference."

"The other way about, you mean," said Williams.

"What my meaning may ultimately turn out to be, time alone can show," I said, somewhat impatiently. "But for the present I do mean what I say. They had too many young men at Paris and not enough old men."

"Oh," said Williams, and stared out of the window. I was uncertain whether he was doubtful about my intelligence or my sincerity, but assumed it was the latter, and so refused to lose my temper.

"My conclusions," I said, "are based on the operations of pure reason. What was the main trouble at the Peace

Conference? Obviously, this, that the men who made the Treaty refused to look facts in the face. They drew up a system of European frontiers that cannot possibly endure. They created little nations that cannot possibly survive. They imposed upon Germany an indemnity that she cannot possibly pay. They refused to profit by the lessons of the past. They insisted on cutting off their noses to spite their faces. They were passionate, intolerant, impatient of mathematics, self-contradictory, violently absurd."

"They were a set of wicked old men," said Williams.

"I am arguing from pure reason," I said. "And pure reason indicates that all the qualities I have enumerated are the vices of youth. Who is it that refuses to acknowledge facts or snaps his fingers at the facts? Who is it that insists on abstract rights even if those rights have been asleep for a hundred years? Who is it that insists on undoing ancient wrongs even if they are so ancient as to have become established rights? Who is it that refuses to become reconciled with evil, even after it has been defeated? The answer is Youth. The trouble with Clémenceau, Lloyd George, and Woodrow Wilson was apparently that they were fifty years too young—by pure reason."

"They were spiteful old men," said Williams.

"Then they must have been highly exceptional old men," I said. "Far be it from me to say anything in justification of the old. But their vices, as I have usually studied them in the columns of the radical press and in the indictments written by young men for the *Atlantic Monthly*, are not the ones exhibited at Versailles. Take, for instance, the old men who are such a drag on progress in our own country, a

drag on social reconstruction, on the freer and happier life, on the freer and better literature and art. Why are they a drag? Not because they are spiteful but because they are timid; because they insist on letting well enough alone; because they are all for postponing things, and patching things up, and for saying 'Hush, hush.' If you get an old man into a corner, he will make concessions. He will not die for an ideal. In other words, he will be reasonable. But none of these things happened at Versailles. Therefore it is plain that the Treaty must have been written by the young men. For it is the young who insist on having their own way."

"They brought on the war," said Williams.

"The young men did?" I said.

"No, the old men," said Williams. "They merely sent out the young men to do the fighting."

"Since the young men, as a rule, are the sons of the old men," I said, "I have always found it rather hard to believe that the old men went deliberately at the business of murdering the young men. Once upon a time it used to be said that it was the young men in the armies who were eager for war. To put it rather brutally, a good sized war, with heavy casualties, meant advancement for the junior officers. In peace times the world moves on, as a rule, by the law of seniority. War is, as the young see it, a big boost for the merit system. Speaking again from pure reason, who do you imagine would be the more eager for a scrap, the middle-aged colonel and the elderly brigadier, who are within hailing distance of a comfortable retiring pension, or the young second lieutenant, who cannot afford to get married on his

salary? You have read Edward Bok's autobiography, of course? "

Williams said he had not got around to it, being still engaged upon the second volume of H. G. Wells.

"Bok knows less about the paleozoic fauna than Wells," I said; "but he knows a great deal more about people to-day. Bok has pointed out the real trouble with the old men in these United States. They refuse to retire from business, as they should, at the age of fifty or thereabouts. This means that they have no leisure to taste of other things in life than business, and no leisure to look back and pass judgment upon what they have been doing. But worst of all, it means that they keep young men out of the jobs which the young ought to have for their own sake and for the greater profit of humanity. The old men stick around and get in the way."

"And what have I been saying?" said Williams.

"You have been saying just the opposite. You have been saying that the old men are wicked; whereas they are only a nuisance. They are not an active force for evil. They just potter around. Mr. Wells gets it all wrong when he sneers at the old men of the tribe. It isn't the old men of the tribe who make wars; it's the young bucks of the tribe. The veterans sit around the campfire and tell stories about how brave they were when they were young and how there are no such warriors now, and that on the whole it would be better not to fight, and how, at least, the witch-doctors ought to be consulted first and the Sacred Fuzzy-Wuzzy and the August Oracle and the Sanctimonious Ibises. It is the young fellows who say, 'Let us set out without

loss of time and bash in the face of the hereditary enemy.' So this is what you have to decide before you are quite sure that the old men are responsible for the mischief at Versailles. You must decide whether old men are a danger or only a bore."

"The need at Versailles was for a new vision, a generous response to the demands of a new age," said the voice of Williams's favorite editorial writer, speaking through the mouth of Williams.

"If by generous you mean a mind and heart open to new, bold ideas—" I said.

"I do mean that," said Williams.

"Then youth is generous," I said. "But if by generous you mean that youth is kindly, tolerant, and understanding—"

"I mean that, too," said Williams.

"Then youth is nothing of the kind," I said. "For the first set of virtues excludes the second set. To the extent that youth is aflame with an ideal, it will not endure compromise with any other ideal. Only a cynical old man will do that. And as for the motive behind youth's idealism I suspect you will often find it to be self-interest. After all, there is no particular merit in youth's wanting to go forward; that's where the youth belongs. Youth wants the new for the same reason that old age clings to the old; there is its opportunity. If I wanted to be really harsh I might say that youth wants the new because the old has already been preëmpted by the old men. Like free verse or the small-town novel."

"When it comes to making a point I prefer the old way of saying what a person means," said Williams.

"It is simple," I said. "Young people are now writing unrimed lines because they think that is the better and truer poetry. But the true reason is, of course, that the old crowd has done very well with rimed verse, and competition for a newcomer is much easier by striking out in a new field. And because the old people have done very well with the sugary novel the young folks have gone in for mustard and pepper. Suppose William Dean Howells had written like Theodore Dreiser. Dreiser would now be writing like Howells—if he knew how. So when you hear of youth knocking on the door, don't think only of the old man on the inside. Remember, after all, that the other fellow is bent upon getting in. That's why he knocks."

"He ought to get in," said Williams.

"By all means," I said. "That's where Edward Bok is so profoundly right. And that is where the Peace Conference made a mistake. If there really were no young men there, they should have let the young men in."

"What would have happened?" said Williams.

"The young men would probably have taken an extra slice out of Germany and an extra twenty or thirty billion dollars," I said.

PATERNAL AFFECTION—A PERIL

“**W**HAT we need,” said Williams, “is a law establishing a speed limit on a man’s duty to his family. Violation of the law should be a penal offense.”

“We need it?” I said.

“Would I be suggesting it if we didn’t?” he said. “Look at the stuff in your scandal columns. Ten times more mischief is done by men who feel they owe it to their families than by men who let their families starve. What I mean is a law that will prohibit unreasonable speeding in the matter of providing for the future of your children. It might be scientifically graduated. For instance, in the city the maximum should be, say, twenty thousand dollars for a family of three children. When a man has laid aside that sum to distribute among his offspring when they are twenty-one, he should be prohibited from engaging in any occupation that promises to carry him beyond that amount. In the country the maximum might be put at \$15,000, or perhaps a bit lower. The size of a man’s family will, of course, have to be taken into account. I should think \$6,500 for every son and daughter in the city and \$5,000 in the country and towns of less than fifty thousand population would be about the right figure. You’ll agree to that.”

“I will agree,” I said, “provided I find out what you are driving at.”

“But I’ve told you,” said Williams. “Look at your scan-

dal and gossip columns. Here's an eminent clergyman holding down one of the best-paying ecclesiastical jobs in the country. He's saved up quite a bit of money; so much, in fact, that he is ashamed to reveal the exact amount. What does he do? Does he go at his pastoral work harder than ever because his salary has enabled him to lay aside something for a good many rainy days? No. He goes into timber schemes and gets into a mess, loses his money, signs a lot of promissory notes, quarrels with his friends, and so down and down till he lands on the lecture platform. And the cause of it all? His duty to his family. A speed-limit law like the one I have suggested would have kept this man from making a wreck of his own life and smashing the ideals of a great many good people. Now do you see the point? "

I said yes, but he went on.

"Here's another case. This time it is not scandal, but a social crime. Here's an eminent judge. He is an honor to the law and a force for social righteousness. He works for \$10,000 a year, perhaps for as much as \$15,000, or \$17,500. His position is secure. We have really reached the point where an honest and able judge is fairly sure of re-election or reappointment for a long term of years. Suddenly he resigns and goes into private practice, because he owes it to his family. Here's the Governor of a State. His election has been the beginning of what you might call a moral awakening. He has had to fight hard, but the people are with him, and every day he remains in office the State is a better place to live in. Then he resigns because the expenses of the office are heavy, and he goes into private practice to insure the future of his children. Here's a useful bu-

reau chief at Washington. He has done excellent work for the country, he has influence, popularity, everything. Then a fashion magazine offers him a million dollars a year to be its contributing editor, and he throws up his job because he owes it to his family. If this is so, you will agree with me that the family is a moral danger and a social menace."

"People will persist in loving their young," I said.

"They should be made not to," said Williams. "Mind you, I am not arguing now for the old-fashioned notion that the best legacy a man can leave to his children is poverty and an honest name. Honesty and poverty by themselves are rather a drug on the market. Though even there one might put up an argument. I should imagine that being the college-bred eldest son of a Chief Justice who died leaving an estate of \$2,477 with no debts is a fairly good start in life. But if that young man's father, in addition to good health, a good name, and a college education, leaves him, say, \$6,500, what more would he want? He can go into business with that or he can spend three years abroad and make himself a pretty good chemist or pathologist or ethnologist or whatever he would like to be. A fortune of \$6,500 in the city and \$5,000 in the country, a sound body, a decently trained mind—that's as much as the President of the United States owes as a duty to any one of his children."

"The simple life," I said.

"The honest and effective life," he said. "When those men speak of their duty to their families, what is it they think of? Automobiles for the young man at college, Europe every other year, Palm Beach alternate years, and in

the end—I mean the father's end—the assurance for his children of a steady income, obviating all necessity of work. The odd thing is that it is your multimillionaires who have the soundest ideas regarding what they owe to their children. If your father is a railroad king, he puts you to work in one of his freight stations as soon as you graduate; and if he is a money king, he puts you behind a desk in front of a ledger and a cash book."

"That," I said, "proves what I meant by the simple life. Only the very rich can afford it. The man of moderate means knows what it costs to be simple and useful and he tries to save his children from the fate."

"I wonder," said Williams, "whether they really mean what they say when they speak of one's duty to one's family."

"What becomes of your argument if they don't?"

"There is a story by Edith Wharton," he said. "It's called 'The Pelican,' I think. I haven't read it myself, but I remember a book reviewer's account of it. That isn't much, but it's something. It's about a woman who is left a widow with one child, a boy, and no money to speak of. To support the boy she goes on the lecture platform. She makes a success of it; in part her success is due to the fact, which she is rather careful to publish, that she is doing it all for her son. The boy grows up and goes into business and makes his way and is perfectly competent to take care of his mother, not to speak of himself. But his mother keeps on lecturing. The fact is, she likes the work, the excitement, the publicity, and the tradition of self-sacrificing mother-love. The son resents being made an object of un-

necessary charity even if it is his own mother. I don't recall how it all ends, but you see the point."

I said I did, but he insisted on driving it in.

"I sometimes suspect that these men who go in for money because they owe it as a duty to their children really like the business of money-making in itself, the fun of it and the things that come with money. It's rather unfair to put it all up to one's children."

"How about your speed law then?" I said.

"Well," he said, "we might indict them for false representation."

SURGICAL

WILLIAMS said he wondered whether people weren't going too far in all this talk about revitalized constitutions and that sort of thing. He said he could go back a dozen years and recall at least a dozen infallible schemes for reinvigorating the American constitution, and he didn't see that we were any better off.

"You refer," I said, "to the encroachment of the Executive upon the Legislative department?"

"No," said Williams, "I was thinking of the interstitial gland."

Williams said there was a time not so many years ago when the diseases of old age could be warded off and life could be indefinitely prolonged by walking barefoot in the grass. The method was quite simple. You got up soon after sunrise and walked for half an hour in the dew-laden grass. Then you took Indian club exercises in your bedroom and breakfasted lightly on toast and coffee without sugar. You gave up smoking two hours before and after every meal and in public conveyances. You cut out all pastries and red meats for lunch, to which meal you devoted at least an hour, chewing your food carefully, and finishing off with a half-mile walk. The same process was followed for dinner, except that you walked two miles and a half. In the course of the day it was desirable to drink at least a dozen glasses of water. Bedtime was at 9. People who tried it must

have derived much good from the barefoot treatment, but, somehow or other, it has passed out of fashion.

"You don't suppose," I said, "it was because people felt that even if life were indefinitely prolonged it would be too short for this sort of program?"

"It may be," said Williams. "Subsequently people set out to combat old age with buttermilk. The idea was not a bad one. You got up shortly after sunrise, took light exercise, had your cold tub, and breakfasted moderately on toast and two glasses of buttermilk. The use of tobacco was prohibited for an hour and a half after breakfast and the same period before lunch, which consisted of buttermilk, toast, and a bit of white meat if you felt you must have meat. After lunch you walked half a mile. The same process held good for dinner, except that you were supposed to walk two and a half miles. The best results were obtained if the patient drank a dozen glasses of water in the course of the day, a glass of hot water immediately after rising and another before retiring. Bedtime was at 9. I have known this treatment to do much good. People who had been made twenty years younger by walking barefoot in the grass told me they had never felt so young as after they had tried buttermilk. And yet buttermilk has gone out."

"You don't imagine people were frightened by the thought of being yanked back into helpless infancy if they kept it up?" I said.

"Perhaps," said Williams. "Well, after that we had the violet ray, and after that bran and mineral oil. I suppose you know all about them?"

"Not in detail," I said, "but I assume it means getting

up at 5:30, massaging your scalp with the violet ray, Indian clubs, mixing bran with your oatmeal, cutting down to three cigarettes a day, walking four and a half miles, omitting pastry and sugar, and going to bed at 9."

"That's pretty near the idea," said Williams, "except that you have omitted the hot water morning and evening and a dozen glasses of spring water in the course of the day. And now it is the interstitial gland."

"I fail to see the parallel," I said. "The cures you have mentioned were all essentially hygienic. This other thing is a radical experiment in surgery. They take the interstitial gland from the body of an ape and transplant it into the human patient—"

"I know all that," said Williams, "but here is the suspicion I can't get rid of. After they have inserted the interstitial gland into your system, will they make you get up at sunrise and cut out tobacco and French pastry and drink a bucket of cold water? Personally I don't believe in miracles. I don't believe you can cure constitutional breakdown by taking out something here and inserting it there so that the next time a treaty of peace comes up you find every organ coördinating perfectly with every other organ. That's a problem of a different nature."

"You refer to the increase of degenerative diseases among men over fifty?" I said.

"No," said Williams, "I mean the encroachment of the Executive upon the powers of the Senate."

"That's flippancy," I said. "If you had made even a superficial study of Dr. Voronoff's experiments with the interstitial gland you would think differently. The method of

transplantation, as a matter of fact, is not new. For some time before Dr. Voronoff announced his discovery—”

“What is the interstitial gland?” said Williams.

“For some time before Dr. Voronoff announced his discovery,” I continued, “extraordinary results had already been attained with the thyroid gland. By means of injections into the thyroid gland it has been found possible to add several inches to the stature of undersized children. In the same way—”

“Just where is the thyroid gland located?” said Williams.

“In the same way,” I continued, “it has been found possible to stimulate the growth of intelligence in children by manipulation of the pituitary gland, either through the removal of pressure on the gland or the application of pressure—I don’t at the moment recall which.”

“The pituitary gland is somewhere in the throat, isn’t it?” said Williams.

“And as to revitalizing the constitutional powers of the Senate,” I said, “I don’t believe that a surgical operation would work miracles, though I admit the case calls for heroic treatment. But on the other hand, light exercise and rest—”

“And here’s what I am thinking about,” said Williams. “How about the sophomores at Yale?”

“Sophomores? Yale?” I said.

“You will recall,” he said, “that whenever anything new comes up, like walking in the grass or the interstitial gland or the carbonic contents of lime juice, they try it out on the sophomores. They lock them up in an ice box or put them into a bath tub and feed them on lime juice or recite to them

the Gettysburg Address and see whether the water spills over. The only thing they haven't tried on sophomores is filling them up with Latin and mathematics and seeing what happens. Or do you think that the interstitial gland has no effect on the intelligence? "

"Sophomores, you mean? " I said.

"I was thinking of the Senate," said Williams.

STANDING ROOM ONLY

IN the several hundred books on the Drama more or less, which have been published since the first of January, you will look in vain for any allusion to the one great discovery about the theater made in recent years. Mr. Granville Barker was the discoverer. Even Mr. Barker gives you only half the truth, but that means at least 48 per cent. more truth than you find in the average book on the drama. It happened at a dinner of university presidents, editors, and financiers, and this is what Mr. Barker said:

“When I think of the millions of people who get from the theater, night after night, all their mental and moral stimulus, and to whom it is the greatest teacher at the most susceptible time of their lives—between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five—”

How many of your analysts of the stage who have written on the Theater and Religion, the Theater and Democracy, the Theater and the New Spirit, the Theater and the New Sociology, the Theater and the What-not, have ever stopped to take account of this simple, basic fact, the Theater and the Average Age of Theater Audiences? Mr. Barker has here gone to the heart of the problem. He has not bothered to portion off his public into the recognized classes, the Tired Business Man, the Buyer from Peoria, Ill., the Highbrow, the Lowbrow, the Reformer and the man who falls asleep immediately after the rise of the curtain. He

has found the formula which cuts horizontally across the entire public. To the young and the comparatively untaught the theater must make its appeal. The box office would corroborate him. Older people go to the theater, but they are in a minority. If men under twenty-five stopped taking women under twenty-five to the show, you might as well shut up shop.

But what does it mean when you say that theater audiences are made up in the main of people between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five? It means that the theater must make its principal appeal to men and women in the mating season. It means that your audiences do not know, and are not concerned with, the realities of life, but are very much concerned with romance, with illusion, and most intimately with themselves, as the happy inhabitants of the very best of all possible worlds. You have to deal not with an intellectual audience, but with an emotional audience, and one that recognizes only the sweeter emotions. Intellectually they are apt to be satisfied with "Nellie the Beautiful Cloak Model." That is, if your young man of twenty-five is from Harvard and your young woman of over seventeen from Vassar, you may have to make Nellie a little less golden-haired, but Nellie will do.

Consider the Victrola. Consider the ready-made suit that is different. Consider the collapsible canoe, the patent house paint, the vacuum cleaner, the motor car, the chemically pure soap, the sanitary tooth powder, and the fireless cooker. Observe how the men who have these commodities to sell and advertise them in the magazines have recognized that the strongest appeal is made to men and

women in what I have called the mating season. Nearly everything that is advertised in the magazines is made to touch on that most susceptible age, the magic age of romance, illusion, and quite ridiculous optimism. In the magazine pages, only the young dance to the strains of the Victrola. The ready-made suit from Chicago is only for young manhood, with a girl exultant over the cut of the collar. The collapsible canoe has a girl in it. The vacuum cleaner is manipulated by youth and beauty. The patent house paint is applied by athletic youth on a ladder under the ecstatic gaze of a very young bride. People in middle age presumably use chemically pure soaps and sanitary tooth-pastes, but not in the magazine pages. Always the appeal is to youth and romance. Advertisers presumably know that when a man and a woman are in love you can sell them anything.

How much more true, then, is it that youth must be the ultimate consumer in that specialized market of the emotions—the theater? When the critic with the horn-rimmed spectacles sneers at the play that is written for the young man and his best girl, it simply shows that something more than horn-rimmed spectacles are needed for understanding the mission of the drama. Take away the emotions and the outlook of the young man and his best girl and you have cut the underpinnings from nearly all of your plays, poems, pictures, and music. So that Mr. Granville Barker, in emphasizing the function of the young in the theater, has done a real service.

Further than this we cannot go with Mr. Barker. If he thinks that he can build his cherished theater of Ideas, of

Truth, of Life, on this foundation of emotional youth, he is sadly mistaken. If he thinks he is going to make his theater a school for moral and mental stimulus for men and women in their most susceptible age—from seventeen to twenty-five—he is wrong. You can teach them before they are seventeen; they are not troubled with emotions then and are still inclined to recognize authority. You can teach them after they are twenty-five, because life has begun to teach them at this point and you can help a bit. But you cannot teach them between seventeen and twenty-five, because they are too busy to learn. They are too happy to be taught by tragedy and they are too ignorant for comedy. The very suggestion of a theater of ideas for the young is absurd. They don't want ideas as long as they have all the emotions they can harbor.

We may put it bluntly, then. If the great mass of your theater-goers is twenty-five years of age and less, you may as well give up your hopes for a popular theater of Ibsen, Shaw, Synge, the soberer Pinero, Shakespeare, and certainly Brieux. You cannot have a theater of ideas for the young if you will once more stop to think of the Victrola.

For it must be plain that in this magic time between seventeen and twenty-five, this time of illusion, romance, faith, and comparative intellectual quiescence, all Victrolas emit enchantment, all ready-made suits enshrine Apollo, all patent house paints wear for years at an absurdly low initial expenditure. Try to imagine a mordant satire of the Victrola, try to imagine a remorseless exposé of the cost of painting your own roof, try to imagine an ironic depiction of a correspondence course in agriculture. With men and women

in their time of romance the thing can't be done. They don't want the truth as long as they have themselves and illusion.

Your theater of ideas, if it is built, will be built for those of us who are more than twenty-five. That is why it can not be a very big theater.

FARMERS

WILLIAMS said that he viewed with disquiet the drift from the farm to the cities. He said the percentage of increase in our urban population since 1910 was unprecedented, especially if you were not careful about your decimal points. The other day on the train young Loftus figured out that if things continued as they are now the population of the cities in 1930 would be three times the population of the cities and the country combined. And when Jennings pointed out that Loftus should have divided instead of multiplying Loftus said what difference would that make as long as our farmers kept taking everything out of the soil without putting anything back.

"You refer," I said, "to the time when there will not be enough food raised on our farms to feed the cities?"

"No," said Williams; "I was thinking of 'Slick Gents' up at the Wintergreen."

Williams said he wasn't quite as stirred up over "Slick Gents" as Mrs. Williams was, but he liked it as well as any show he had seen for a long time. That was really an exceedingly moving scene where young Watkins, after a pretty swift career in Wall Street and around Broadway, comes back to the old farm in search of his lost health and his father's forgiveness. You'd have to go far to find a specimen of kindly wisdom like old Si Watkins. What is it in the country air that is so conducive to homely shrewdness

and a thorough knowledge of the human heart? Williams said that if Elihu Root had taken the train for somewhere up-State old Jake Simmons would have had that International Court tangle solved a year ago.

"This is quite true," I said. "I am fond of the theater myself, and I have been repeatedly delighted to hear old Hiram Dunker, who has worked his farm for fifty years and saved up \$411.35, pointing out the secret of success in life to his oldest son, who is president of the Paraffine Trust Company, in Chicago, with a capital stock of \$10,000,000. It is refreshing to see Phyllis Boudoir, who has been doing Greek dancing in New York since 1911, learning the secret of how to win a man's love permanently from her mother, who married in 1876 and has since visited Albany twice. If the drift to the city continues I can very well see how the American drama will come to an untimely end with the exhaustion of our raw stocks of homely rural wisdom."

"Don't you think," said Williams, "that the introduction of business methods would be of help?"

"You mean in winning a true man's love?" I said.

"No," said Williams, "I was thinking of our threatened food supply."

"That," I said, "is a debatable question. It seems to be quite true that the homely wisdom of our farmers, which is always equal to dealing with life in the lobster palaces and on the Stock Exchange, breaks down badly when it comes to running a farm. Perhaps the reason is that farmers are so occupied in looking after their prodigal children from the city that they have little time left for looking after the crops. Just the same, there is, at first sight, a good deal

in the suggestion that what the farmer needs is business methods. It is reasonable to suppose that by installing a double-entry system and a dictograph the per capita output of milk per cow may be notably increased if there is no drought. It is quite likely that by installing electric washing machines such as the United States Treasury employs to launder old banknotes the farmer's wife may afford to get up as late as 5:30 mornings. It is quite probable that if the farmer adopted the auditing methods employed so successfully by the Northeastern Life Insurance Company in its 456 branches the farmer might better know where he is at, provided it rains."

"You don't think it is because at heart we all of us long for the simple things of life?" said Williams.

"That our food supply is threatening to fail?" I said.

"No," said Williams. "I mean why all of us like to see those dear old country sages on the stage."

Some day, it is to be hoped, Williams will learn to listen. But that time is not yet in sight.

"I don't imagine it is so much a longing for the simple life as for the different life," I said. "When it comes to simplicity, it seems to me that we in the city have been reducing life to its simplest terms. People usually worry about food; but soon there will be no food, as you pointed out, and there will be no use in worrying. People usually worry about a roof over their heads, but there is no use worrying, for the city is 40,000 apartments short, and it won't do you any good. People worry about dress, but if fashions continue to get shorter and tighter there will soon be no clothes to worry about. What else is there? Children, to

be sure. Well, that source of worry is rapidly disappearing in the city. So you can see how fast the simple life is coming to town."

"And you don't think business methods will help?" said Williams.

"In the city?" I said.

"On the farm," said Williams.

"I am inclined to think no," I said.

"But just a little while ago you were inclined to think yes," he said.

"Ah," I said, "a little while ago. Since then conditions have changed and I don't quite know what to think. Subject to change without notice, I will venture to say that on the whole business methods would rather hurt than help. Compel the farmer to take to bookkeeping and scientific management and you run a chance of failing to get the small amount of food we may still expect under the present system. Yes, at this moment I feel confident that the worst thing you can do is to turn the farmer into a business man."

"You mean he will only make a botch of business methods?" said Williams.

"Quite the contrary," I said. "The more he makes a go of business principles the better your chances of starving in the city. Teach the farmer auditing and cost accounts and what will happen? He will be definitely confirmed in what he has always strongly suspected; namely, that farming doesn't pay. And what will he do then? He will break from his farm with a yell like the monk of Siberia and beat it, as young Loftus would say, for town."

"I grew up on a farm," said Williams with entire sympathy.

"Agriculture is only possible," I said, "by a rigid adherence to non-business principles. If the price of wheat fell and the farmer were a business man, what would he do? He would behave like a woolen company and stop work. He would let his fields lie idle. Not being a business man, what does he do? He growls a bit louder and plows a bit deeper and works his wife a good deal harder, and so somehow you get your food. Now and then you hear about farmers threatening to go on strike and cutting down their acreage. And what is the next thing you hear? The biggest corn crop on record, or more hay than you could choke all the cows on earth with. You see, somehow the soil is not a factory or a salesroom; it cries to be at work, profit or no profit. And the farmer is impelled by all the forces of his unbusinesslike nature to dig and sow and reap. He is like an ant that must go on laying eggs whether the world needs them or not."

"Does an ant lay eggs?" said Williams.

"I have never studied the psychology of salesmanship, so I don't know," I said.

Williams regarded me with a touch of what almost looked like admiration.

"I think you would make a bully farmer," he said.

"I don't believe I have ever handled a hoe in my life," I said, blushing.

"On the stage, I mean," said Williams.

COMPLEXES IN ORION

(Written before the death of Bert Leston Taylor at
Chicago, March 19, 1921)

WILLIAMS said he wondered if they had psychoanalysis on Betelgeuse. Noticing the look of pain on my face, he hastened to explain. He was not hoping that they had complexes up there in Orion; he was only wondering. On the whole, he was inclined to believe they didn't.

"Do you read B. L. T.?" I said.

"Is it a star?" he said.

"It is," I said. "In the *Chicago Tribune*, and of the first magnitude. I don't know whether Prof. Michelson has measured the diameter of B. L. T., but this much I know about its distance: A ray of light emitted by B. L. T. in the *Chicago Tribune* frequently takes several days before it reaches the paragraphers and columnists in other systems. But that is not the point."

"I didn't imagine it was," said Williams mildly. "You would be getting to it remarkably soon."

"Last summer," I said, "I was delegated to attend the Republican convention at Chicago. I represented a newspaper which had thrown its powerful support to an ideal candidate who received five and a half votes in the convention out of a possible 984. I am perhaps doing him an in-

justice. It may have been six and a half votes. But I am approximately correct. That, however, is not the point."

"But we are getting there," said Williams cheerfully.

"As usual," I said, "I did not sleep well on the train. After that trip, in fact, I could honestly qualify as one of the most eminent authorities in the country on night-life in the Buffalo train-yards, around the Cleveland round-houses, and near the Toledo coal-sheds, if these indeed are the places we passed through. That, however, is not the point. The point is that after a night spent between looking out in the dark and weighing the chances of Lowden, Leonard Wood, and Herbert Hoover, dawn came, and, with it, or soon after, a newsboy who peddled Chicago *Tribunes*. And there, at the head of the column, B. L. T. bade me welcome to his fair city by reprinting his little poem on Canopus."

"A star, I gather," said Williams.

"Very nearly the finest poem in the English language," I said. "I remember only the last two lines. But this is the context: When the politicians and reformers and reactionaries and eugenists and psychoanalysts and other professionals begin to beat their tom-toms, and point with pride and view with alarm, why, then it is good to turn one's thoughts to Canopus:

" 'A star that has no parallax to speak of
Conduces to repose.'

And now you want to take poor Betelgeuse, which is further off than Canopus, and load it up with repressions and things."

"That, I presume, is the point at last," said Williams.

"Williams," I said, somewhat testily, "a ray of light emanating from a human intelligence is sure to reach you in the course of a couple of hundred years."

"I was only wondering," said Williams. "If there is life on Betelgeuse, it occurred to me that a world 27,000,000 times the size of the sun would be just about the place where a few people might manage to live without suppressing their own desires or treading on other people's toes."

"But that is quite an idea," I said with unaffected admiration.

Williams was pleased. He said the thing did not come to him all at once, but as the result of much reading in nervous literature and much reflection. I nodded. Williams gets his philosophy by the sweat of his brow. He is not one of those keen, dynamic minds with whom thought and decision are simultaneous. You lay all the facts before them and in a flash they give you the wrong answer. No, Williams was not like that.

"The thing that puzzles me is this," he said. "On the one hand, all the mischief in the world comes from clamping the lid on your desires. Very well. But when a man doesn't hammer down the lid and reaches out after what he wants, there is the devil to pay. What is the answer?"

"Betelgeuse," I said.

"Just what I had in mind," he said. "Take the Peace Conference, for instance."

"On Betelgeuse," I said.

"In Paris," he said. "I heard a nice lecture the other day. One-half of it was about neurotic discharges and the other half was about Upper Silesia, and reparations, and

secret diplomacy. That's the way most lectures go nowadays. Well, all at once it occurred to me that the Peace Conference was 100 per cent. justified by all the laws of Freud."

"No inhibitions and complexes, you mean?" I said.

"Not a smell of one," said Williams. "The only thing that was repressed at Versailles was the reporters. Everybody else was spontaneous. Now, just imagine what would have happened if the peace makers had behaved the other way about. Suppose Clémenceau had repressed his desire for the Saar Valley, or Lloyd George had repressed his desire for the German colonies, or Orlando had repressed his desire for Italy's just claims in Kamchatka. These men would have been walking complexes for the rest of their lives. They might have become insomniacs, or gone stale on their golf, or lost their taste for the theater, or something equally fatal."

"Then the Germans, by your reasoning—" I said.

"Exactly," he said. "Everybody took a hand at repressing them and the result is that they don't sleep at all. They sit up nights calling everybody names. Or take my coal dealer. In my thoughtless moments, as I look around the cellar, I call him a pirate. But that is a selfish view. Isn't it best for the world after all that the coal man should have my pocketbook if all his normal instincts pull him that way? Repress that fellow's desires for my money and he'll probably go home and beat his wife."

"But Williams," I said, "that's not the way to argue. You don't go back far enough; you don't go back at all. Does it occur to you that if that coal man hadn't been re-

pressed in some other way he wouldn't now be charging you a hysterical price for coal? "

Williams weighed the point in his own honest fashion.

"You mean," he said, "that if the coal man had not refrained from beating his wife he wouldn't now be robbing me? "

"Exactly," I said. "Some one has to pay, you see, for that coal man's attainment of the full and zestful life; if it isn't you, it must be his wife. If a man is not to have fits himself, he should be allowed to give somebody else nervous prostration. It's the law of compensation. Twenty-five years ago we repressed our children altogether too much. They were not allowed to eat except what we thought good for them. They were not to speak until spoken to. They had to go to Sunday school. What is the result? They are now grown up and establishing new poetry magazines."

"That is quite an idea," he said.

"It is virtually your own," I said, modestly. "And it's an idea for parents to keep in mind when they sit down to read the paper at night and the young people begin to hammer down nails or play jazz on the Orpheola. Your first impulse is to take the hammer away and send them to bed; but remember the consequences."

"They will grow up repressed," he said.

"They will," I said. "And that is the bitter alternative—whether children shall grow up nervous or parents shall be driven crazy."

Williams looked glumly out of the window.

"One longs for Betelgeuse," he said.

"You might try B. L. T.," I suggested.

FALLACY OF DISTANCE

WILLIAMS said his objection to the new realism was that it went just as far wrong in one direction as Pollyanna did in the other. It is quite true that people are often worse than they pretend to be. But had it ever occurred to me how often people were much better than they pretended to be?

I told Williams that the thought had occurred to the author of the *Iliad*, the *Mahabharata*, Isaiah, the Platonic Dialogues, St. Augustine, the collected works of Shakespeare, Browning, and William Dean Howells, and now and then it had obtruded itself on my own consciousness.

"Now take the children in Central Europe," said Williams. We were having lunch and he indicated a placard on the wall. It had an ingenious arrangement of transparent slots, of isinglass presumably, where one might deposit any coin from a nickel to a silver dollar and see the total mount up into a visible column of so many real meals for so many hungry children.

"For the last seven years," said Williams, "we have been giving and giving until people now say they are tired of giving. So they say. What they do, as a matter of fact, is to drop half a dollar down the slot—after seven years. Or take China. Remind a man of the famine in China and he tells you that China is pretty far away and that charity should begin nearer home, and why can't the Chinese look

after their own sufferers, and that he might as well let you have a couple of dollars since somebody in any case would take it away from him to relieve somebody in Sumatra."

Williams said it was all the more strange, this business of saving people in Austria and China because here in this big city people seemed to be so little interested in their own neighbors.

"Why should they?" I said. "The chances of anybody starving in the next apartment are virtually nil."

"Do you know the people next door?" said Williams.

"I know that they take the *Times* and the *World*," I said, "because I get up rather early on Sundays; and I know that they take three bottles of Grade A. But I have never seen them."

"That is what the city does to the spirit of neighborliness," said Williams who commutes and tries to practise all the primitive virtues.

"But why should I be neighborly?" I said. "It's different when it comes to my feelings for the people in China. You remember Voltaire's old problem?"

Williams said he thought I had omitted somebody.

"Voltaire put this moral problem," I said. "If you were exceedingly hard up, desperately hard up, and if you knew that by merely wishing the thing you could kill some rich Chinese mandarin 8,000 miles away whom you had never seen or heard of and inherit his possessions, would you do it?"

"I would not," said Williams.

I congratulated him on his excellent bringing up but said that was not the point. When Voltaire—if it was Vol-

taire—said a Chinese mandarin he might as well have said somebody in Mars. But that was nearly 200 years ago. To-day you couldn't wish a Chinese plutocrat to death without getting yourself into very serious personal difficulties. That Chinaman might be the president of a bank, and his sudden demise might knock the bottom out of the silk market, and the Far East might be swept by a business panic, and silver exchange might be disrupted, and American harvester factories might shut down, and the rest is easy to see.

"In other words," I concluded, "the chances are that I could more safely destroy somebody in the apartment over my own than slay the man in China. As things are, the gentleman in Peking may be much more my neighbor than the man on the same dumb-waiter."

Williams said I was anti-social.

I denied the fact. I said that when he preached neighborliness to a man living in Apartment 5C he was simply yielding to the fallacy of distance. He was only indulging himself in the common sentimentality which would import the simple and real virtues of the open country into town where they had little meaning. If people in 5C and 5D fail to turn to each other in illness or distress the reason is that there is no need. The doctor lives two doors away, the drugstore is on the corner, and both are accessible by telephone. There is no use in forcing neighborly relations upon a neighbor with whom you never run to fires, whom you never help in putting up a barn, whom you never join in a *posse comitatus*, with whom you never go out to break open the roads in winter, whose lawn-mower you never borrow, whose hens never wander into your garden, whose chil-

dren never steal your apples, and who in every way is perfectly capable of looking after himself. I said the point in being neighborly was not proximity but contact.

Williams said it was a pity just the same.

I said it was, but not in the sense he meant. There was a debt of neighborliness we did owe to a great many people. But unfortunately life is so arranged that we seldom strike contact with those whose lives touch closely upon our own. And I mentioned Central.

"The telephone girl?" he said.

I said yes. I wondered if one man in a hundred thousand in New York knew anything of the girl on his wire except as a voice; and yet she was more essential to his business and his family, to his victories and his sorrows, than few neighbors in town or country can ever be to each other. Who was this girl that fetched for him doctors and taxicabs, who gave him Chicago or the superintendent downstairs, who carried his vital business secrets and his conventional fibs? Was she tall, short, blue-eyed, red-haired, what?

And I suggested that instead of the neighborhood system we needed something like the Soviet system.

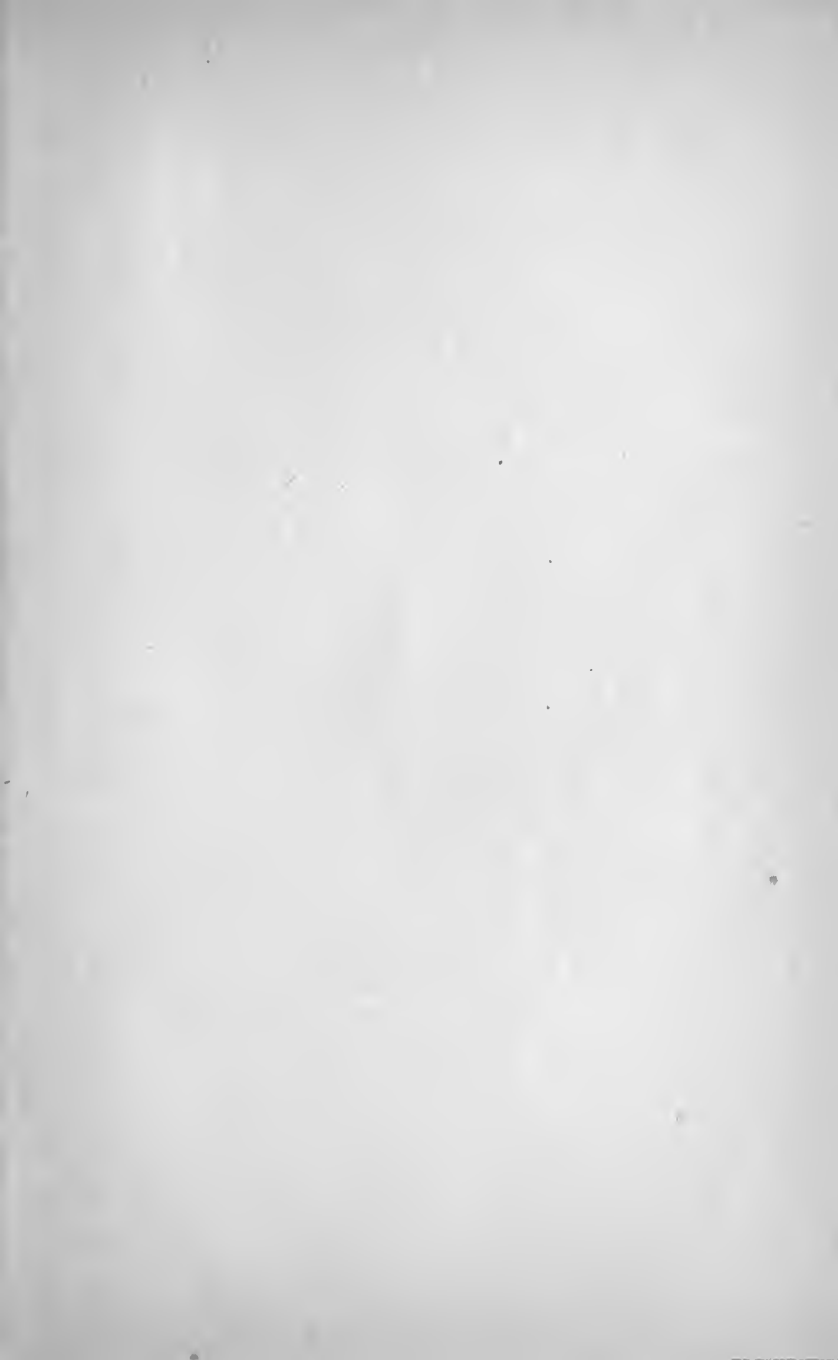
Williams said mildly that sometimes the telephone did act just like that.

"The Soviet system," I said, "would substitute the occupational unit of representation for the geographical unit. It would have a Congressman elected not by a group of people who happen to live in the same block but who have the same economic interest, doctors, or bookkeepers, or street-cleaners, or school-teachers; in other words, people who have real contacts.

"But what do I know of the people who work for me and with me? Central is not alone. She is one of a group of Voices, Noises, Bells, Knocks, Shuffles, which make up the great Unknown of my real neighbors. While it is still dark I am roused to a greater enjoyment of my warm bed by the clink of bottles in the hall. It is the milkman whom I have never seen. A slide and a thud outside the door is the newspaper carrier. I get up and shave in hot water provided by a furnace man who once a year at Christmas time becomes a voice up the dumb-waiter, but nothing else. You commuters know your engine driver, and Mr. Harding has revived Mr. Roosevelt's human habit of shaking hands with him at the end of a journey. But I don't know my motor-man except as the occasional fleeting shadow of a striped jumper and a gray mustache. I know nothing whatever of the lady in Wanamaker's who sends my change up in a tube. Here is an army of men and women who every day hold my comfort, my health, and my life in their hands, but I do not know them. Whereas my next-door neighbor has nothing in common with me."

"But how do you know?" said Williams.

THE END









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